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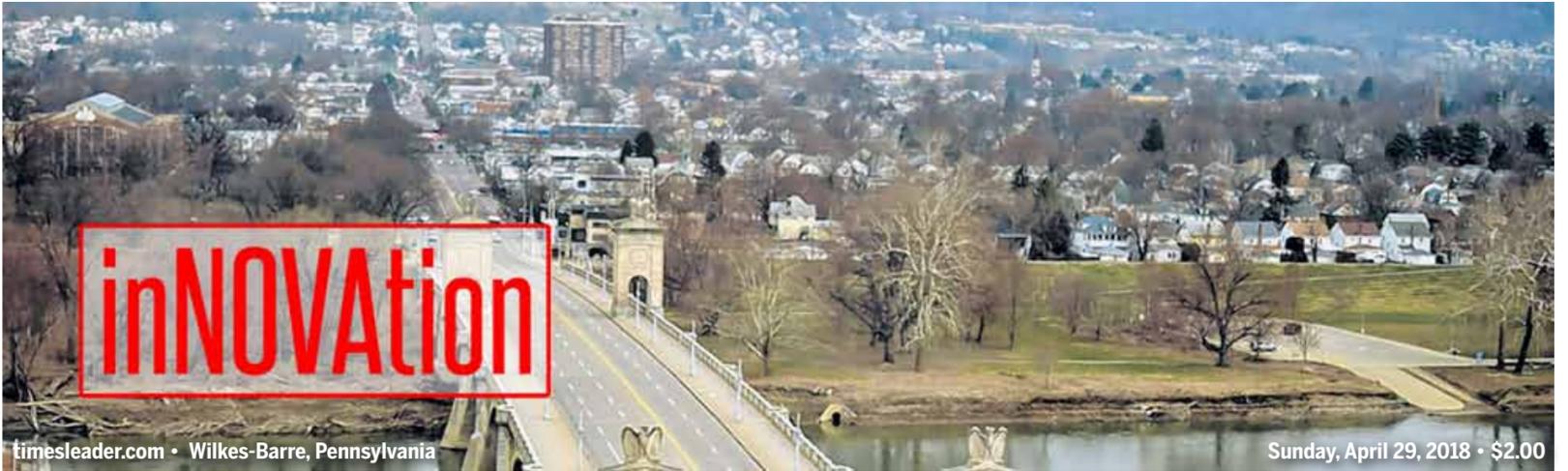
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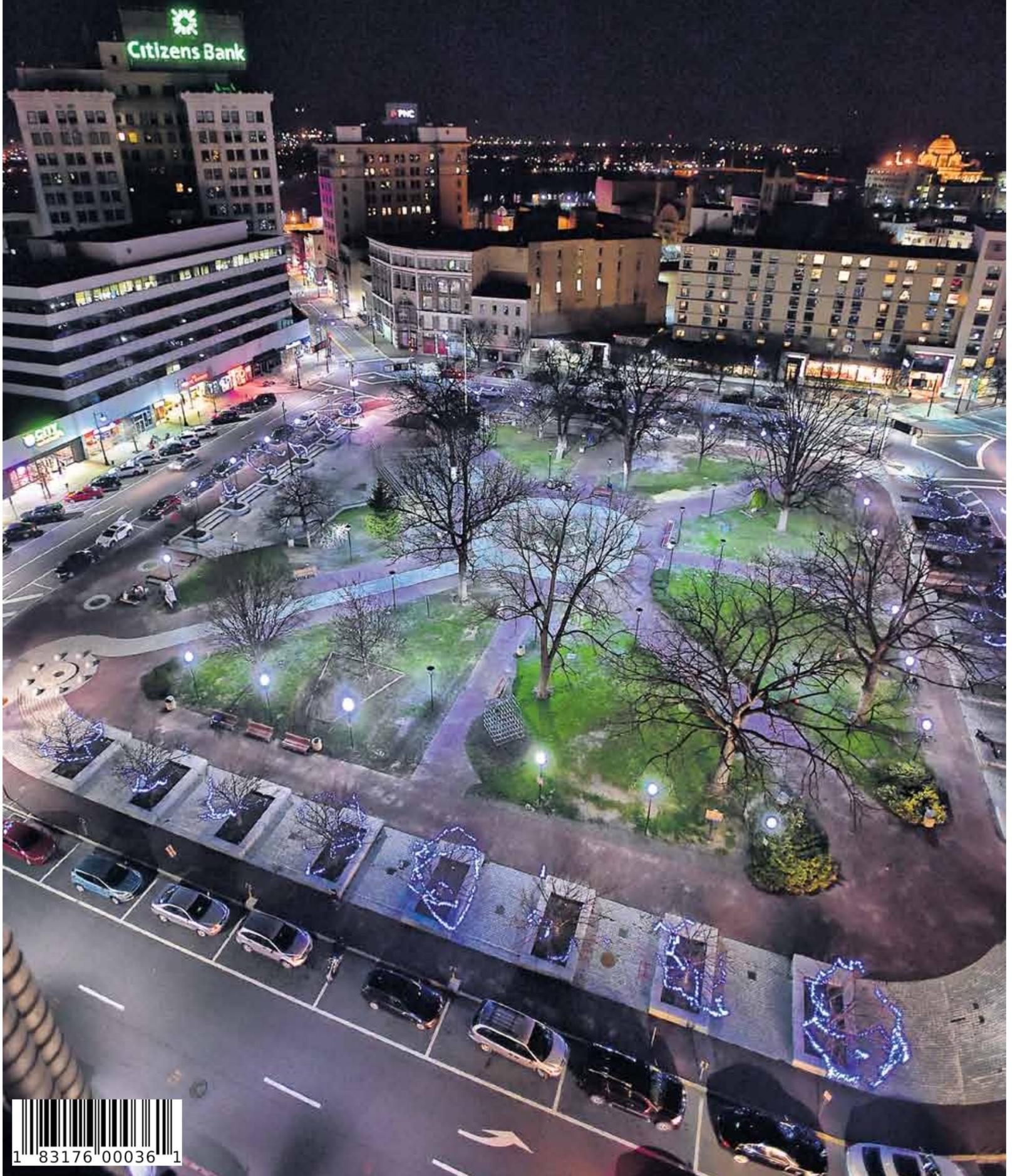


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A panoramic view of Wilkes-Barre's Public Square.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader file photo

Heading in the right direction

Newman: Colleges, technology, residents combined move area forward

By Bill O'Boyle | boboyl@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — The catch phrase that dominates most downtown revitalization discussions is “quality of place,” and those three simple words could hold the key to the future of Wilkes-Barre City.

Quality of place has been defined “as the physical characteristics of a community, the way it is planned, designed, developed and maintained that affect the quality of life of people living and working in it and those visiting it both now and in the future.”

So what does the future hold for downtown Wilkes-Barre?

Larry Newman, executive director at Diamond City Partnership, said in these days of the continuous, progressive process of downtown revitalization, “quality of place” matters more than ever.

“The fact is that, in the 21st century, quality of place is economic development, because we live in an age when talent is mobile, and so a community’s ‘curb appeal’ is a big part of what drives economic prosperity,” Newman said. “Talented people are relentlessly continuing to move to those communities that offer both opportunity and a high quality of place.”

That’s because, Newman noted, quality places attract people.

Newman said the question that’s ultimately asked by visitors to every community, whether it’s conscious or not, is: “Can I imagine myself living here?”

“And, if the people in that community aren’t proud of their town, or they don’t see it as having value, then that’s pretty quickly communicated to a visitor as well,” he said.

So, the key measure of a community revitalization effort is whether the work is ultimately helping to create a place where people want to be. And, Newman said, that starts in the center of town.

“If we don’t want to continue to struggle economically and lose our region’s kids, we need to make better investments in our quality of place and our quality of life,” Newman said. “At the end of the day, Downtown Wilkes-Barre’s health is key to our entire community’s economic viability.”

Downtown is changing

Newman said the downtown is certainly changing — bigger presence for Wilkes University on the southern end and King’s College on the northern end — and both have expanded to



Sean McKeag | Times Leader file photo

Larry Newman, executive director of the Diamond City Partnership in Wilkes-Barre, is the architect of the city’s resurgent downtown revitalization plan.

the downtown proper. So what does this mean for the city and the region?

“Simply put, the growth of King’s and Wilkes, and their emergence as downtown economic anchors, is enormously beneficial to both the city and the region,” Newman said. “These days, there

are lots of American cities that are pursuing economic development strategies based around ‘Eds and Meds’ — colleges and hospitals — but there are very few cities in which that opportunity is so obvious. We have two different four-year higher-ed institutions bookend-

ing Wilkes-Barre’s central business district — any other town would turn itself inside out to be in that situation.”

Newman said there are more than 7,500 students enrolled between King’s and Wilkes, with another

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“These days, there are lots of American cities that are pursuing economic development strategies based around ‘Eds and Meds’ — colleges and hospitals — but there are very few cities in which that opportunity is so obvious. We have two different four-year higher-ed institutions bookending Wilkes-Barre’s central business district — any other town would turn itself inside out to be in that situation.”

Larry Newman
executive director at
Diamond City Partnership



The Wilkes-Barre skyline at night.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

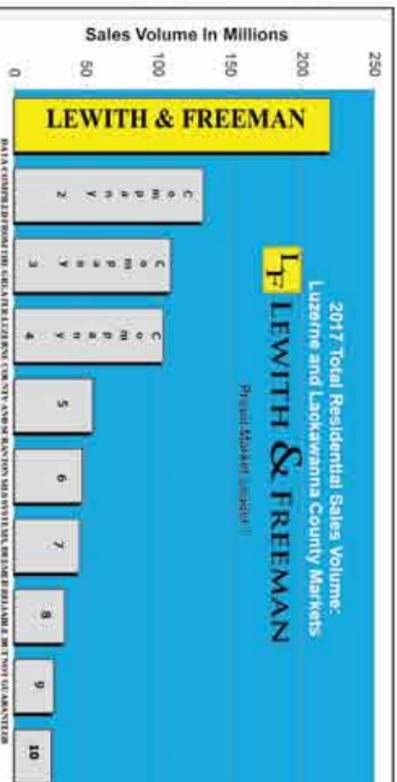
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The F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts lit up for an evening performance.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Newman

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480 at LCCC's Wilkes-Barre Center. Those numbers pack a powerful economic punch — both in terms of the students' own purchasing power, and because of the schools' stabilizing influence on the downtown economy. It could be argued, in fact, that the schools have replaced retailing as downtown's primary activity generator.

And, Newman said, after years in which the King's and Wilkes campuses were essentially academic islands within the center city, they are now working together to capitalize on their presence and leverage their campus growth to create a more vibrant downtown. In fact, Newman said it's one of the major elements of Wilkes-Barre's current Downtown Plan.

Downtown refitting

Newman said one of Wilkes-Barre's downtown planning challenges is the reality that its central business district was built for a population twice the size of what it is today.

"It's sort of like recovering from a long illness and discovering that your clothes are too big," Newman said. "When you combine that with the challenges of a weak market and all of the economic changes that have buffeted every Main Street in America, you end up with lots of empty buildings — stores, churches and more. They're often well built and beautiful, but they've outlived their original function."

However, Newman explained that in a place with two growing educational institutions, those empty buildings

also represent an opportunity for reuse. He said King's and Wilkes have increasingly chosen to repurpose downtown's existing buildings, maximizing the value of what's already in place without the need for new construction, and strategically placing new facilities in locations where they can generate the most civic benefit.

For example:

- King's-on-the-Square (former Ramada) now houses King's sciences programs.
- The old Spring Brook Water Company building on North Franklin Street is about to be remade to house King's engineering programs.
- The Times Leader's old home will soon house more programs for King's as well.
- Wilkes has been transforming the second block of South Main Street with its business school, a new Sordoni Art Gallery, the Karambelas Media Center, and more.
- Wilkes' private match has secured the public dollars that have made possible new streetscapes along South Franklin and West South streets.

• The conversion of the YMCA's upper floors into Wilkes student housing has allowed the Y to remain viable in its historic building.

Newman said all of these moves by the schools are generating follow-on investments by a variety of private developers throughout center city.

"As the lines are blurring between the schools and the city, Downtown Wilkes-Barre is becoming one big campus — and that's proving to be good for both town and gown," Newman said.

Technology to the forefront

Newman said there's no question that downtown has

continued to benefit from the growth of technology-sector jobs and the local startup sector. He said when the downtown is referred to as "the region's innovation district," that isn't a marketing slogan.

"It's a fact," Newman said. "Right now, Downtown Wilkes-Barre is home to more than two-dozen different tech startups, and one-third of all the information-sector jobs in the entire Wilkes-Barre/Scranton/Hazleton metropolitan area."

Newman said there are several reasons for this, but one of the big reasons is the fact that, across the country, an increasing number of office-using businesses now view walkability as a basic site-selection amenity.

To put it another way, office employers have discovered that a location in a vibrant live-work neighborhood — especially one with colleges — makes it that much easier to attract talented workers. And, Downtown Wilkes-Barre is the best live-work neighborhood in NEPA, Newman said.

Newman said when you work in downtown you enjoy:

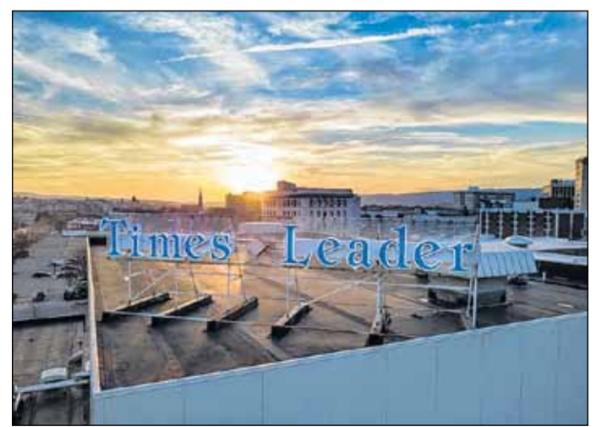
- Immediate access to dozens of different lunch and after-work options.
- Retailers and personal services for lunchtime errands.
- Lots of fitness and recreation opportunities that are as close as the sidewalk.
- The resources of multiple higher-ed institutions.
- An endless supply of those informal networking opportunities that are so important to getting business done — all within a five-minute walk of your office.

Then, Newman said, you add the availability of startup-assistance programs like the Keystone Innovation Zone and Wilkes-Barre Connect's "Pitch" and "Spotlight" initiatives, along with a variety of startup-friendly office options, and you can understand why local tech businesses like APPEK Mobile Apps, LSEO, Mobiniti, Special Guest, and PlanGuru have all chosen to locate in Downtown Wilkes-Barre.

Luxury living popular

Newman said luxury living is a major part of the downtown now and more downtown residents offer more benefits.

"The best way to bring back a downtown, hands-down, is to get people living there



With new home, upgraded press TL recommits to downtown WB

WILKES-BARRE — With a newly refurbished facility and an upgraded press, the Times Leader has reconfirmed its commitment to downtown Wilkes-Barre.

The newspaper sold its North Main Street building in January to King's College and combined its operations in its building at 90 E. Market St.

"We are extremely excited to be able to bring all of our employees under one roof and continue to be a leader in the downtown Wilkes-Barre business community," said Times Leader Media Group Publisher Mike Murray. "Over the past several months, we've invested heavily in our press to ensure a quality group of products are printed and delivered."

"In addition, through enhanced technology, moving to our Market Street facility allows us to take the next step in expanded news coverage by creating a mobile newsroom," Murray continued. "This allows our team of professional journalists to be in the communities we serve faster and more often."

"Our commitment to remaining the dominant news voice in Wilkes-Barre remains at the top of our priority list along with providing the readers of Luzerne County only the most complete and up-to-date coverage," the publisher added. "We take our mission seriously and are so proud to be a part of so many daily lives. This move strengthens our ability to meet the needs of the consumers of our market."

The Market Street building now hosts the Times Leader's advertising, circulation and editorial departments in addition to its press and production facilities.

Wilkes-Barre Mayor Tony George was pleased to hear the newspaper is committed to the downtown area.

"It's great that the Times Leader is dedicated to remaining in the city," George said.

George wasn't the only person happy that the Times Leader will still call center city home.

"It concentrates the paper in their building on Pennsylvania Avenue while making investments to update and modernize their building into our eastern gateway into the city," Wico van Genderen, Chief Executive Officer at the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, said. "The city benefits, the college is enhanced, the Times Leader continues to operate as a whole in the city and it continues our economic development momentum in the Valley."

The newspaper welcomed more than 30 state, county and city officials and business and community leaders to a ribbon cutting on Thursday to celebrate the opening of the remodeled Market Street building.

"The Times Leader is here to stay in Wilkes-Barre and we look forward to continuing our over 100 years of service to the community as the only local daily newspaper printed in Luzerne County," Murray said.



Sean McKeag | Times Leader file photo

The interior of a D&D Realty luxury apartment unit on East Northampton Street in Wilkes-Barre. The apartment is just one of many in the downtown area that allows people to live within walking distance of work, shopping and entertainment options.

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“ The best way to bring back a downtown, hands-down, is to get people living there again. ”

Newman

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again,” Newman said.

And that objective is being accomplished. Newman said 152 new market-rate lofts and apartments have been constructed in eight different rehabilitated downtown buildings during the past six years alone — and another 48 units are currently under construction. The new residential developments provide a multitude of benefits to downtown, as well as to the larger community, he said.

Newman said the new housing projects account for more than \$11 million in private dollars that has been invested in the city. The projects took a series of older, functionally obsolete commercial buildings that had been sitting largely empty, and made them productive again.

Newman said the new downtown households have given an economic boost to the city. Newman said the downtown residential growth creates new customers for downtown businesses: his organization’s most recent survey showed that center city residents are regularly patronizing downtown restaurants and stores at substantially higher rates than any other survey respondent category.

And, Newman noted, downtown residential growth creates new tax revenue. He said the City of Wilkes-Barre had expected to end 2017 with a year-end deficit. Instead, it ended the year in the black — in large part because of a notable increase in earned income tax revenue that was due, almost entirely, to new downtown residents.

“More people living in downtown also means that Wilkes-Barre’s central business district has become busier and more vibrant,” Newman said. “Downtown’s sidewalks no longer roll up at 5 p.m. For a long time, we’ve talked about the need to create an ‘18-hour downtown’ — those new residents are a big part of the reason why that goal is being realized.”

Less ‘brain drain’

Downtown housing also plays a major role in the regional battle against “brain drain,” Newman said. According to the U.S. Census, from 2000 to 2015, 40 percent of Wilkes-Barre’s city-wide growth in college graduates under the age of 35 occurred within 8 percent of its land area — the 18701 ZIP code. In fact, during the past five years, the number of young college graduates living in downtown has doubled, Newman said.

Why is that? Newman said one reason is today, 32 percent of wage-earning downtown residents walk to work — compared to 8 percent of city residents



Rodano’s on Public Square with the new home of Berkshire Hathaway GUARD in the background. Restaurants, residents and downtown workers are keys to the city’s resurgence.

and 3 percent of county residents.

“In today’s socio-economic climate, walkability matters to the success of a community,” Newman said. “It’s very simple — if Greater Wilkes-Barre wants to be a place that can compete, we had better ensure that we can point to walkable, mixed-use urban places like Downtown Wilkes-Barre, places where a car is a choice, and not a necessity.”

But Newman said he is not telling everyone that they have to live in the city, or live without a yard or a car. He said it’s about building a community that provides choices — because if we don’t do that, a lot of people who are fortunate enough to have a choice about where they want to live will choose not to live in this region at all.

Ultimately, Newman said successful downtown planning is about “placemaking” — about creating a place where people want to be.

“Downtowns are built for people — the more people they attract, the better they function,” Newman said. “That’s why downtown is at its best during Farmers Market or the Fine Arts Fiesta, or when lots of people are shopping, or dining, or spilling out of a Kirby Center event.”

Newman said the best way to make a place feel safe is to ensure that it’s busy — healthy downtowns need people on the sidewalk.

“The most vibrant downtowns are very dense places with a robust and interesting mix of uses,” he said. “We’re getting there, but we’re still a long way from where we used to be.”

Connecting the dots

Newman said it’s not always easy to “connect the dots.” For example, sometimes there are too many gaps to encourage visitors to the Kirby Center or the colleges to venture down the street.

“As a result, where we choose to build is just as important as what we choose to build,” Newman said.

Newman said adding new residents and businesses is part of the solution, but so is the improvement of the physical environment —

restoring historic facades and buildings, and investing in the quality of the experience at street level. Filling in gaps, like at the northwest corner of Northampton and South Main streets, at the former Hotel Sterling site, or elsewhere is critically important.

Newman said it’s important to note that Downtown Wilkes-Barre only started to revive once projects were undertaken that had the effect of making the business district more dense, more pedestrian-friendly, more lively, more varied in its mix of uses.

“In other words, once we began making it more ‘city-like,’” Newman said. “When we’ve gone in the other direction — for example, when we’ve privileged cars over people, or replaced buildings with parking lots — we’ve slid backwards.”

Newman said at the end of the day, it’s about creating value, both in an economic sense, and in an intangible sense. So many of the community’s challenges stem from decades of disinvestment and eroding value, both in downtown and throughout the Wyoming Valley.

Incremental progress plan

Newman said all of the revitalization efforts are guided by a Downtown Action Plan that’s built around six major goals:

- Downtown will be a safe, clean, and attractive place to live, work, shop, and visit.
- Downtown will be the region’s college neighborhood.
- Downtown will be the region’s “walk-to-everything” urban neighborhood of choice.
- Downtown will be the region’s “Innovation District:” its hub for business, startup activity, and entrepreneurship.
- Downtown’s historic architecture, walkability, riverfront, and colleges will be the cornerstones of its enhanced visitor experience.
- Downtown will be a regional center of arts, culture, dining, and entertainment.

Newman said those aspirational goals have informed most of what has been done in downtown

during the past few years.

“They’ve helped us to prioritize investments and make better choices,” he said. “And, we’ve made a lot of progress.”

He said the “region’s college neighborhood” goal has brought King’s, Wilkes, and the public and private sectors together as the schools work to anchor both ends of Main Street; the “Innovation District” goal has led to investments like the Chamber’s THINK Center and the Wilkes incubator; all that new downtown housing is bringing the idea of a “walk-to-everything urban neighborhood” to fruition; and, with existing assets like the F.M. Kirby Center and new assets like the burgeoning restaurant scene and the three galleries in the second block of South Main, the “arts and entertainment” goal is well on its way.

“By every objective measure — storefronts filled, restaurants opened, new housing units, new residents, new business startups, cleanliness, safety, visitor numbers — downtown is doing better than it was a decade ago,” Newman said. “However, we know that we still have work to do.”

Newman said more work needs to be done on creating a more consistently hospitable public environment.

One of the big items on the “to-do” list is Public Square — literally the heart of the Wyoming Valley — and it works very well during Farmers Market and other big events, but the rest of the time, it simply isn’t living up to its full potential. Newman said he has been working with the city to develop a phased plan to address the Square’s physical and operational issues, with the first steps to be taken later this year.

Newman also said there needs to be more progress made with the preservation of downtown’s historic buildings. He said they are a huge part of what makes center city special, and a place that’s worth visiting. He said projects like the preservation of the Irem Temple, or the creative reuse of so many other great old downtown buildings in need of a new purpose, are very high on the priority list.

Wilkes-Barre has what corporations are looking for

By Bill O’Boyle
boboyle@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — When Amazon announced last year that it was actively seeking a site for its new HQ2, every economic development guru went crazy trying to find the right way to convince Jeff Bezos to choose them

In case you forgot, here is what having HQ2 in your neighborhood would mean:

- Amazon HQ2 will be Amazon’s second headquarters in North America, with an expected \$5 billion investment in construction and as many as 50,000 high-paying jobs. Additionally, HQ2 is expected to create tens of thousands of additional jobs and tens of billions of dollars in additional investment in the surrounding community.

Larry Newman, executive director of the Diamond City Partnership in Wilkes-Barre, said Amazon’s “HQ2” proposal made it apparent that the company’s preference is for an urban or downtown site, planned in a fashion similar to its Seattle campus, making it simple for workers to commute on foot, on bike or by transit.

Sound familiar? “Long before Amazon ever issued its HQ2 request for proposals, our downtown plan embodied the principles outlined in their RFP,” Newman said. “Our downtown plan is a conscious effort to create a walkable, live/work, mixed-use downtown core with a critical mass of activity.”

Newman said it all started about a decade ago, with the theater project and the Innovation Center, and continuing with developments such as the colleges’ various downtown projects, the restaurants, the multiple residential conversions, the River Common, and GUARD.

“We’ve deliberately encouraged investments that foster vitality at street level and act to knit the downtown back together again, so that people have more reasons to walk around downtown, as well as a better environment in which to walk,” Newman said.

The long-term goal, Newman said, is to position downtown as a place where you need only park once before walking to a variety of destinations. Alternatively, he said, the goal is to be a place where you don’t have to drive at all — and, in fact, downtown already has higher numbers of people commuting on foot, by bike and via transit than does the community as a whole.

“To be sure, we still have a long way to go,” Newman said.

It’s also worth noting that there’s a website called WalkScore.com, which ranks the walkability of almost every address in the U.S. from 1 to 100. According to WalkScore.com, downtown Wilkes-Barre currently has a “Walk Score” of 92, which puts it in the “Walkers Paradise” category reserved for neighborhoods where daily

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“We’ve deliberately encouraged investments that foster vitality at street level and act to knit the downtown back together again, so that people have more reasons to walk around downtown, as well as a better environment in which to walk.”

Larry Newman

“



The Market Street Bridge that connects Wilkes-Barre and Kingston.

DID YOU BOSCOV TODAY?

inNOVation

Just about everyone has



Times Leader file photo

Boscov's department store on South Main Street in Wilkes-Barre.

Retailer bucking national trend; downtown store thriving

By Bill O'Boyle | boboyle@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — When the conversation turns to downtown revitalization, there is one name that always comes to the forefront.

“Did you Boscov today?”

That simple, yet effective slogan has been



Jim Boscov

around for decades.

The five-floor department store with all the bargains and the loyal, friendly sales staff and the management/ownership that customers are on a first-name basis with, has been the anchor in downtown Wilkes-Barre for generations.

“Put simply, in downtown Wilkes-Barre, Boscov's has become synonymous with the word ‘shopping,’” said Larry Newman, executive director at Diamond City Partnership. “Boscov's is our downtown retail anchor, serving everyone from center city workers shopping on their lunch hour to customers from throughout the Wyoming Valley for whom it is a retail destination.”

So successful has Boscov's been, 2017 was a record year for sales for the 46-store chain.

Jim Boscov, the president/CEO of the family-owned business, looked back on 2017 with great pride. Boscov's retail success is a sharp contrast to what has been going on in the world of large department store chains — many having closed numerous stores or filed for bankruptcy.

But not Boscov's. Jim Boscov said a new store opened in October 2017, and another new store will open in October of this year in Connecticut, bringing the total to 47 Boscov's.

And as successful as Boscov's has been, 2017 began on an extremely sad note — Albert Boscov died on Feb. 10, 2017, at the age of 87. Albert's leadership, based on bringing quality merchandise at reasonable prices to customers, is the foundation that the business is built on and continues today. Add to that the loyal customers and workers and extensive community service, and you see why



Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

the answer to “Did you Boscov today?” is almost always “yes.”

The survey shows

Newman said 69 percent of all respondents to the Diamond City Partnership's most recent online community survey reported that they are regular or occasional customers of the city's downtown Boscov's. In fact, Newman said, more survey respondents said that they were

regularly shopping at Boscov's than at the Wyoming Valley Mall.

“In this day and age, that really says something about the efforts of Boscov's management and associates,” Newman said.

Downtowners patronize Boscov's even more heavily — according to the same survey, 80 percent of downtown workers and 70 percent of downtown residents are shopping at

Boscov's regularly or occasionally.

“It's easy to take Boscov's presence on South Main Street for granted, until you remember that most American cities once had big department stores anchoring their Main Streets, and that almost none of those stores remain today,” Newman said. “In fact, I can't tell you

See BOSCOV'S | 7

Boscov's now carries a new line of furniture by Scott Living.

Looking

From page 6

errands do not require a car.

“In comparison, the city as a whole has a Walk Score of 61, so,

we're headed in the right direction,” Newman said.

Newman said the HQ2 proposal repeatedly stressed Amazon's desire for a walkable, connected, mixed-use campus in a setting that would attract the

necessary technical talent. Respondents were directed to outline the availability and diversity of the housing options adjoining the proposed sites, and to identify all transit options — specifically pedestrian access

and bike lanes.

And, Newman said, the proposal repeatedly asked respondent communities to outline all “connectivity options: sidewalks, bike lanes, trams, metro, bus, light rail, train, and additional

creative options to foster connectivity between buildings/facilities.”

So despite not being among the final 20 possible sites for HQ2, Wilkes-Barre has a solid plan in place to progressively improve the downtown

and beyond.

As Amazon seeks a vibrant, walkable live-work environment, a much smaller version has been unfolding right here in Luzerne County.

Reach Bill O'Boyle at 570-991-6118 or on Twitter @TLBillOBoyle.

Community growth starts with ABCs

To paraphrase the great home run king Roger Maris and the Roman philosopher Seneca, retention, innovation and growth don't just happen by chance, but are accomplished when preparation meets opportunity.



Wico van Genderen
Guest Columnist

area has strong value propositions to leverage, we've made key strategic investments, and we are broadening them out on the academic front, the business front and in the quality of the community.

Our area continues to grow in its diverse industry and labor mix. With a Northeastern Pennsylvania workforce of more than 250,000 workers, our main industry segments are in the enviable education and healthcare sectors as well as in the growing tech services and e-commerce sectors.

And it is in these four areas that we have made strong and steady progress over time.

Approximately 65,000 people are employed in healthcare and education in NEPA, and this strength is changing our area's landscape. On the academic front, our colleges and universities are working together with business and community leaders to transform the valley from a town of individual colleges to a collegiate region focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and business. Luzerne County Community College continues to expand and drive the

workforce feeder system for the higher education and specialty trades, and LCCC's expansion throughout the region localizes that mentality.

Concurrently, Wilkes University is gaining momentum as an internationally recognized STEM Research Center of Excellence through investments in its sciences, engineering, pharmacy and business school programs, as well as in the arts. Wilkes has been hard at work transforming the second block of South Main Street with its Jay Sidhu School of Business, the Sordoni Art Gallery and the Karambelas Media

Center.

King's College has invested in STEM and business, and is nationally recognized for its finance, accounting and health sciences programs, exemplified with King's on the Square, the revamped McGowan School of Business, and the allied health and health management expansion in the former Times Leader building on North Main Street.

And while Wilkes is putting the finishing touches on its new home for engineering, King's has initiated its own civil and mechanical engineering program — bringing life back into a long

vacant North Franklin Street downtown building with its upcoming School of Engineering. All three colleges in the downtown are making our center city an innovation district, creating a Petri dish for start-ups and entrepreneurs, and an emerging business model that makes up a third of the technology jobs in our NEPA region.

This growing academic presence is paying dividends with some of the largest student enrollments of all time at our institutes of higher learning, and helping make Wilkes-Barre Northeastern Pennsylvania

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Boscov's

From page 6

how many times I've watched people who are here on business make a point of stopping by Boscov's while they're in town simply because of the opportunity to experience a traditional full-service downtown department store, with five floors connected by escalators, a restaurant and a candy counter. It's hard to appreciate how rare that has become."

Core values matter

Jim Boscov said his uncle instilled all the core values in his family and workers, and they are adhered to each and every day.

"We have seen a record increase in our sales," Boscov said. "Most retailers are not doing



Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Boscov's sells outdoor furniture.

that. And that sales increase is before our e-commerce numbers are added in — it's just for brick and mortar sales — and that is impressive and we are proud of that."

Boscov said the key to success is cultivating and embellishing their relationships and part-

nerships with vendors and that is passed on to customers.

"People give the company its personality," Boscov said. "It's all about people — loyal and wonderful workers and customers."

Boscov said many Boscov's employees know their customers by

name and they often talk about family and other issues in their lives. That personal touch, Boscov said, is one of the main components to Boscov's approach to good business.

Future plans

Boscov said there are no immediate plans to

change anything at the Wilkes-Barre store. He said the recent million dollar-plus renovation project was received well by customers and employees.

"Our goal is to maintain our business in Wilkes-Barre," Boscov said. "If you really want to be that local family business, you have to be a part of the community for real, not pretend, and we do that."

Serving the needs of the community is another important part of Boscov's corporate mission.

"It's the right thing to do," Boscov said. "Is it good for business? Sure it is, but it's also the right thing to do."

Boscov said he likes what he has seen in the downtown in recent years — more residents, more restaurants, a big- presence of Wilkes

University and King's College, the success of the F.M. Kirby Center, Movies 14 and Barnes and Noble and more.

"All of that is so incredibly healthy for the downtown," Boscov said. "There has been a real resurgence, and that is very exciting. We certainly want to be a part of it and supportive of it."

Boscov said a lot of good work has been done improving the downtown.

"The good news is you've got people very involved who have made a difference and will continue to make a difference," Boscov said. "I always look forward to spending time up there and hope to spend more time there."

Reach Bill O'Boyle at 570-991-6118 or on Twitter @TLBillOBoyle.



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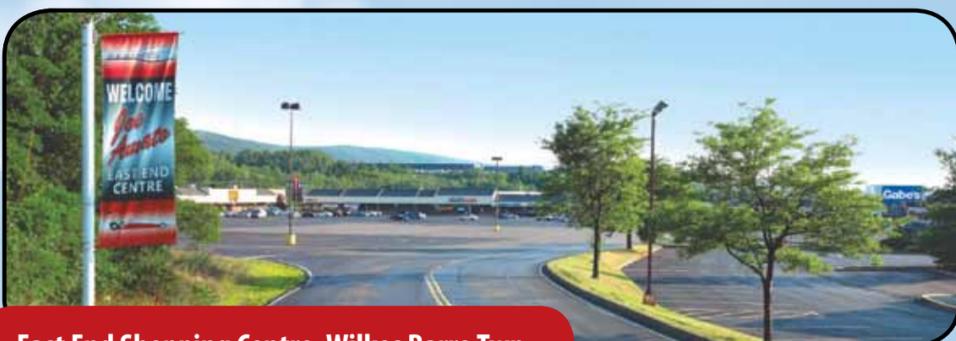
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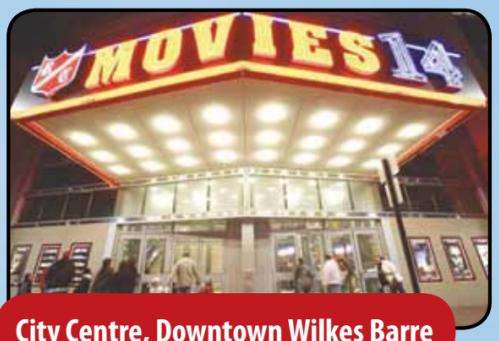
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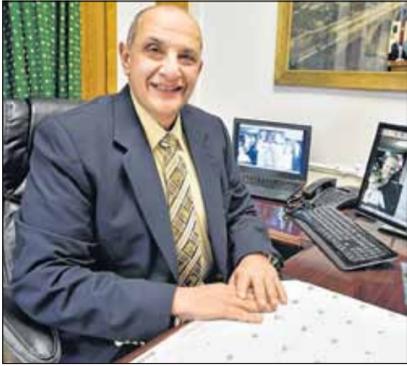


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Aimee Dilger | Times Leader File Photo
Wilkes-Barre Mayor Tony George in his office at City Hall.

George loves that old college spirit

By Bill O'Boyle
boboyle@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — Having two colleges bordering the city's downtown has the support of first-term Mayor Tony George.

Despite the criticism some have leveled against the continuous encroachment/expansion of Wilkes University and King's College to the downtown, the mayor sees it not just as a good thing, but as a major key to the city's successful future.

"Having Wilkes and King's increasing their presence brings more life into the downtown," George said. "Students know that shopping, dining and entertainment are available right next to their campus."

George said the students are working and interning at Wilkes-Barre businesses both large and small. "As mayor, I hope that the students, whether from the area or further away, have a college experience that will encourage them to work and live in Wilkes-Barre and build a life here," George said. "Additionally, Wilkes and King's are both expanding their engineering programs and facilities, which will attract additional students, professors, and engineering firms looking for new talent."

Larry Newman, executive director at Diamond City Partnership — steward of the downtown — said the growth of King's and Wilkes and their emergence as downtown economic anchors is enormously beneficial to both the city and the region. He said most cities would welcome having all those students and employees living, visiting and working in their downtowns.

Wilkes-Barre has more than 7,500 students enrolled at King's and Wilkes, with another 480 at LCCC's Wilkes-Barre Center. Newman said those numbers translate to a huge economic impact.

"The growth of the colleges is a positive, as they are investing in the city through their expansion projects and the educated and quality students they produce," George said. "However, we need to ensure that businesses, which add to the tax base, are growing and expanding as well."

More jobs downtown
For that, the mayor looks to Berkshire Hathaway Guard, which recently decided to remain in the city and will soon occupy the largest office building on Public Square. The move will bring more than 700 jobs, including more IT and marketing positions, to the city.

George said there are multiple companies founded by local tech entrepreneur Kris Jones operating in the city, along with many marketing, media and tech start-ups.

The mayor noted a few other key additions:

- Restaurant Depot — a restaurant supply company — is building a location in East End which will bring numerous jobs to the city.
- Highmark is in the process of bringing in its United Concordia Division to

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'A vibrant economic engine'

Chamber president: Region is in midst of resurgence



A look at the Wilkes University Karambelas Communications Center on South Main Street. The Sordoni Art Gallery is housed in the same building.

By Bill O'Boyle | boboyle@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — While the city has seen a significant resurgence in recent years, the head of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Partnership says there has been a regional economic surge as well.

Wico van Genderen, president/CEO at the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, said the city is going through an economic resurgence, and the area is attracting national, regional, entrepreneurial and start-up businesses.

"We are retaining and growing our small, mid-sized and large business base," van Genderen said. "We are surgically building-out our downtown, growing our industrial parks and expanding our traditional legacy businesses throughout the region and in doing so, we are transforming the valley, diversifying the base and sustaining a vibrant economic engine."

Now in the third year of the Chamber's strategic plan, van Genderen said it's all about execution, execution, execution. "With a coalition of our ABCs — academic, business and community leaders — we have very strong value propositions to leverage," he said. "We have made key strategic investments to build upon and broadening it out on the academic front, the business front and the quality of the community."

Academic front

Van Genderen said the region's colleges and universities are working together with business and community leaders to transform the Wyoming Valley from a town of individual colleges to a collegiate region focused on STEM (Science, Tech, Engineering, and Math) and Business.

- Luzerne County Community College continues to expand and drive the workforce feeder system for the higher ed and specialty trades and LCCC's expansion throughout NEPA localizes that mentality.
- Wilkes University is gaining momentum as an internationally recognized STEM Research Center of Excellence through its investments in its Sciences, Engineering, Pharmacy and Business School as well as in the arts.
- King's College has invested in STEM and is nationally known for its finance, accounting, business and health sciences programs exemplified with King's on the Square, the upcoming engineering school on North Franklin Street and its Allied Health and Health management expansion on North Main Street.

Van Genderen said while Wilkes is wrapping up its new home for engineering, King's has initiated its own civil and mechanical engineering program bringing life back into a long vacant North Franklin Street downtown building.

"All three colleges in the downtown are making our center city an innovation district, creating a Petri dish for start-ups and entrepreneurs and a nascent business model that makes up a full third of the technology jobs in our NEPA region," van

"We have made key strategic investments to build upon and broadening it out on the academic front, the business front and the quality of the community."

Wico van Genderen
President/CEO at the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce

Genderen said. "And it is paying dividends with some of the largest student enrollments at all of our higher eds."

Berkshire Hathaway GUARD

Van Genderen said Berkshire Hathaway GUARD Insurance's recent announcement to locate its headquarters on Public Square and expand its business in the downtown has created hundreds of new family-sustaining, living wage jobs.

And, van Genderen said, the announcement comes on the heels of Warren Buffet's prediction that GUARD will quadruple their business in five years.

"Already GUARD represents a \$29 million annual economic impact in the city with more than 500 jobs in the downtown," van Genderen said. "Add Highmark's growth with their United Concordia Dental Care and Commonwealth's and Geisinger's multi-million dollar investments in the city and you create a transformational health, tech and services sector that creates a strong economic base along with the colleges for the area."

These business sectors contribute to make Wilkes-Barre northeast Pennsylvania's largest single concentrated employment center with more than 13,000 people working in the city each and every day, van Genderen said.

Arts and entertainment

And, van Genderen said, the region is seeing growth not just in STEM jobs, but also in the transition of the downtown as a magnet of the arts and

entertainment.

The FM Kirby Center for the Performing Arts, with its nationally-ranked programming, generates close to \$10 million of economic impact to the city. In parallel, the second block of South Main Street is being transformed by Wilkes University into an arts district anchored by the relocation of the Wilkes Sordoni Art Gallery, the Karambelas Communication Center and the Sidhu School of Business.

"The arts, the innovation and the renaissance vibe are creating a desire to once again live downtown, creating an influx of housing development in the city," van Genderen said. "Our western riverfront gateway into the city has seen the Citizens, Wyoming Valley and PNC bank buildings transformed into apartments and restaurants. The recent announcement to build upon the old Hotel Sterling site and turn it into a multi-use condo/business conference/retail center adds to that transformation."

Success breeds success

Van Genderen said the coalition, collaboration and partnerships between academia, business and community are transformative.

"Through those partnerships, we have built-out a great economic development ecosystem called Wilkes-Barre Connect," van Genderen said. "We are now executing full throttle on five specific initiatives within Wilkes-Barre Connect — Pitch, Spotlight, 101, Intern and Honor."

- **Pitch** — is the Chamber's version of Shark Tank, linking entrepreneurs with the investment community.
- **Spotlight** — the Chamber's version of TED Talks: a non-partisan, nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas,

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Sean McKeag | Times Leader file photo
Wico Van Genderen, president and CEO of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce.




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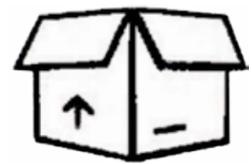


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Former coal land attracting commercial projects

By Jennifer Learn-Andes
jandes@timesleader.com

As it nears sale of a 330-acre site in Nanticoke and Hanover Township, the nonprofit Earth Conservancy is shifting much of its focus on another one of its mine-scarred holdings — a 2,200-acre swath known as the Bliss/Truesdale site.

Located primarily in Hanover and Newport townships, the Bliss/Truesdale project will create a mix of residential, industrial and public open space after it is cleaned up, said Earth Conservancy Executive Director Mike Dziak. Between 400 and 500 acres must be reclaimed, he said.

“That’s the next big area for us to do work,” he said.

Final negotiations are underway for Earth Conservancy to sell the 330-acre tract to Missouri-based NorthPoint Development, which brought online pet-supply retailer Chewy.com to Hanover Township, Dziak said.

Known as “Hanover 9,” this partially wooded land runs along Route 29 on the east side and will connect to the new South Valley Parkway that is under construction. It is also accessible from Kosciuszko Street near the Lexington Village



Miles



Dziak

residential development and across from Luzerne County Community College, maps show.

Brent Miles, NorthPoint’s economic development vice president, has said his company plans to construct three buildings over three years with the following square footage: 1.3 million, 307,000 and 507,000.

He provided a low estimate of 1,300 to 1,500 new jobs at the site but said it could be 2,000 to 3,000.

The company must invest millions of dollars to grade the land and add utilities, sewer, water and roads, Miles has said.

In a recent interview, Miles said his company has been submitting development plans and expects zoning approval to wrap up soon, which would allow a groundbreaking in several weeks.

Miles plans to start with construction of two buildings that should be completed in early 2019.

“This will be a busy summer for us,” he said. NorthPoint’s Chewy.



Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

The 172-acre Hanover Ridge Trade Center houses Chewy.com and two new buildings that will soon be occupied by athletic apparel maker Adidas and Patagonia Inc., an environmentally conscious American company that sells outdoor clothing.

com project also is on land that was once owned by Earth Conservancy. The nonprofit had borrowed \$9 million to fill deep mine pits and contour the terrain, eliminating an eyesore and readying the spot for development.

This 172-acre tract — NorthPoint is calling it the Hanover Ridge Trade Center — also houses two new buildings that will soon be occupied by athletic apparel maker Adidas and Patagonia Inc., an environmentally conscious American company that sells outdoor clothing, Miles said.

Visible from busy Interstate 81, the buildings at this complex have generated lots of positive feedback, Miles said.

“There’s something

about those buildings where they sit. When you come into the valley and see those buildings, they really pop,” he said.

Miles said he intends to impress area residents and officials by putting the new 330-acre site back into productive use.

“The elected officials saw the work we did at Hanover Ridge, and it’s been a big success. Hopefully we can emulate some of that at the new park at Hanover 9,” Miles said, describing the Wyoming Valley as his “second home” and one of his favorite development areas of many he oversees throughout the country.

Bliss/Truesdale

Earth Conservancy recently received \$2.5 million in abandoned

mine reclamation funding to complete the third phase of cleaning up and prepping the site, which involves additional reclamation and some infrastructure and utility connections.

The second phase, which should be completed this summer, will reclaim a more than 30-acre, mine-scarred section to create a building pad, Dziak said.

“Getting utilities in and bringing the roadway in from the new South Valley Parkway will entice developers to come in and develop this land,” he said.

A master plan on the more than 2,000 acres should be completed this spring to help market the site and guide the nonprofit on how the tract should be carved out, he said.

Dziak expects approximately 1,000 acres from the Alden area to Sugar Notch will be preserved for public use.

“We also have nice, pretty areas for residential development, especially in Sugar Notch, but we’d need to get infrastructure in there in a cost efficient way,” he said.

While it may take years, he is confident the project will materialize because he believes devel-

opment interest in this area is the highest since his organization acquired 16,000 acres of former Blue Coal land in the early 1990s.

An improved economy, the elimination of many unsightly mining remains and the area’s proximity to major highways are some reasons for the change, he said.

“A number of years ago it was very bad, and we had nobody knocking on the door. Now we have a lot of interest,” Dziak said.

His nonprofit has sold or donated more than half of its holdings for residential and commercial development or to be kept as green space.

More than 2,000 acres was reclaimed, and another 2,000 must be cleaned up before it can be used for new development or recreation, he has said.

The effort to preserve pristine land and address environmental hazards and repurpose mine land for new uses is helping to transform the region, he said.

“This is a great opportunity for the area to both grow and clean up the mess,” Dziak said.

Reach Jennifer Learn-Andes at 570-991-6388 or on Twitter @TLJenLearnAndes.

Resurgence

From page 8

usually in the form of short, powerful talks. TED is an acronym for Technology, Entertain-

ment and Design.

• **101** — provides business basics videos and podcasts to get experts and mentors to coach young professionals and entrepreneurs on how to turn their ideas

into operational businesses.

• **Intern** — links college students to the businesses community to provide a bridge to keeping our best and brightest in the area.

• **Honor** — channels the region’s large veteran population to bridge their great training in the military and leverage that into the entrepreneurial business community.

Van Genderen said Wilkes-Barre Connect provides the intact form to connect businesses into the economic ecosystem no matter where they are in the business life cycle to help

maximize the diversity, the success and the sustainability of why the Wilkes-Barre region is good for business, good for growth and a solid investment into the future.

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Franklin's Restaurant, adjacent to Rodano's, in downtown Wilkes-Barre.

George

From page 8

Wilkes-Barre.

• All One Resource has also moved its headquarters into the city, bringing close to 50 jobs.
 • The Wilkes-Barre THINK Center gives companies a launching pad, complete with support from the business community. The Chamber's Wilkes-Barre Connect initiative is continuing to assist start-ups and existing businesses by partnering them with service providers that can help them to grow their business in NEPA.

Downtown living

Luxury living has become a major part of the downtown in recent years and the mayor sees many benefits as a result.
 "The growing number of downtown residents provides a city lifestyle — one in which residents live, work, dine, shop and enjoy the arts and entertainment in just a few short blocks," George said. "Downtown residents contribute to the city's economy and help to fill the semi-vacant buildings which are now being renovated by private firms."
 So with more people living downtown and more to do, what are the next steps to returning that "vibrancy" that everybody wants.
 The mayor says the best way to improve the downtown is to promote the many restaurants, shops, entertainment venues, and community events that take place in the downtown and

throughout the city.
 "We are actively working with the Chamber of Commerce, Diamond City Partnership and the Downtown Wilkes-Barre Business Association, along with the local colleges to plan and promote community events which will bring more residents and visitors downtown," George said. "I believe that the downtown businesses do a great job cross-promoting each other."
 The mayor said the city has a wide variety of restaurants, and the diversity of the cuisine continues to grow. Also, he said more small and medium businesses are launching or expanding downtown and therefore investing in the city.

Now and future

Mayor George said he and his team are always moving forward.
 He said the downtown's strength is its breadth of dining, entertainment and shopping options and the business-friendly atmosphere.
 "Additionally, a strong police presence adds to the safety of the downtown," he said. "But the biggest improvement to the downtown would be to fill empty storefronts, offices and apartments."
 Mayor George said technology is constantly changing.
 "And as a community, we need to stay on top of it," he said. "While investing in technology, we must also continue to support our brick-and-mortar businesses."

Reach Bill O'Boyle at 570-991-6118 or on Twitter @TLBillOBoyle.

ABC

From page 7

nia's largest single concentrated employment center with more than 12,000 people strong. Our center city is open for business and growing. Add Highmark's growth with its United Concordia dental plans, Commonwealth Health and Geisinger's multi-million-dollar investments in the city, and Guard Insurance's recent announcement to locate its headquarters on Public Square and expand in our downtown, and you see that great things are happening here. The convergence has created hundreds of new, professional, family-sustaining, living wage jobs, and the result is a transformational health, tech and services sector with a strong base that leverages our colleges and universities for a dynamic economic ecosystem.

Our healthcare community, anchored by Geisinger, Commonwealth Health, Allied Services, Highmark and the Wilkes-Barre Veterans Administration Medical Center, now employs close to 45,000 people and represents our largest industry segment.

It is supported by a wide range of healthcare and services employers, including Benco Dental, CVS Caremark, Pride Mobility, AllOne Health and Luzerne Optical. Many of our area's 17 colleges and universities offer strong healthcare sciences programs and serve as professional workforce feeder systems to the growing healthcare job market demands, for example, Misericordia University's Physical and Occupational Therapy programs, King's College's Health Care Administration, Physician Assistant and Allied Health programs, Wilkes University's Nesbitt School of Pharmacy and Pasant School of Nursing, and Luzerne County Community College's programs in nursing

and a variety of healthcare disciplines.

We are seeing our ABCs – academia, business and community – in action outside the city as well. Misericordia's expertise in physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology and nursing has driven the largest capital expansion drive in the university's history to support the region's burgeoning health science sector. Penn State Wilkes-Barre recently made significant technology and classroom upgrades to its Science Center, and the university's sponsorship of the Chamber's THINK Center is bringing students closer to the businesses, creating camaraderie among the colleges and adding to the area's innovation center of excellence.

Thirty to 50 years ago, Wilkes-Barre was surrounded by closed mining operations and slag heaps that needed mitigation.

Today, what was once scarred land has become modern office, retail and industrial parks that have created more than 14,000 jobs with more than 13 million square feet of space housing over 300 businesses. In annual taxes, those businesses contribute \$10 million a year in property taxes alone to the county, townships and school districts.

Further, this growth is far from static. The new Chewy.com fulfillment center is already expanding to a million square feet employing over 1,200 people. Nearby, Patagonia and Adidas will be adding another 1,000 jobs with their distribution centers. And we are diligently working on another 1,000 to 1,500 jobs with the development of an additional two million square feet of business space coming on line soon. Our value proposition in proximity, supply chain, financials and land makes our area a clear winner for developers to build new industrial sites attracting more e-com-

merce to add to the diverse businesses we are attracting to our region.

Success breeds success. The coalition, collaboration and partnerships between academia, business and community are transformative. Through ABC partnerships, we have built out a great economic development ecosystem called Wilkes-Barre Connect and are now executing full throttle on five specific initiatives: Pitch, Spotlight, 101, Intern and Honor.

Pitch is our version of Shark Tank, linking entrepreneurs with the investment community. Spotlight is our version of TED Talks, and 101 provides business basics, videos and podcasts to get experts and mentors coaching young professionals and entrepreneurs on how to turn their ideas into operational businesses. Intern links our college students to the business community to provide a bridge to keeping our best and brightest in the area. Honor channels our large veteran population to leverage their military training into the entrepreneurial business community.

Finally, Wilkes-Barre Connect provides the intake form to connect businesses into the economic ecosystem no matter where they are in the business life cycle to help maximize the diversity, success and sustainability of why the Wilkes-Barre region is good for business, good for growth and a solid investment into the future.

President Ronald Reagan once said, "There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits of human intelligence, imagination and wonder."

With our coalition of ABCs – academia, business and community – we are defining our future by actively participating in its outcome.

Wico van Genderen is president and chief executive officer, Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, Business and Industry.



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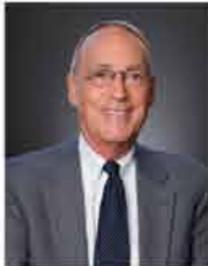
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'This is where we want to be'

Third generation taking charge at Dundee Gardens



Julie Fallon, the education director at Dundee Gardens in Hanover Township, sets up equipment she intended to use for Earth Day activities.

By Mary Therese Biebel mbiebel@timesleader.com

HANOVER TWP. — “We’re ready for the planting season,” Maggie Sheehy-Zembruski said earlier this month, happily surveying

the stock at Dundee Gardens on the Sans Souci Parkway. “The annuals and perennials and fruit trees are here.” “We’re thinking spring.”

Spring is one of the busiest times at the third-generation family business, which Sheehy-Zembruski’s grandparents founded in 1949.

But nature fans find reasons to visit Dundee in all four seasons — from scooping up potatoes and onion sets to plant this time of year and replenishing garden supplies through the summer to perhaps bringing their favorite youngsters to carve pumpkins in the autumn or select a Frasier fir, Steinbach nutcracker or Byers Choice caroler in time for Christmas.

“This is where we want to be,” Sheehy-Zembruski said, explaining that she and her husband, attorney John Zembruski, moved their young family from the metropolitan New York/New Jersey area back to her native Northeastern Pennsylvania about five years ago, sensing the time was right for a change of pace.

“We think of this as not just a retail operation but a house of education,” Sheehy-Zembruski said, explaining how Dundee Gardens schedules seminars for children and adults throughout the year, offering opportunities as diverse as grooming and riding a horse, composting, hand-crafting a scarecrow, building a bird-feeder, creating your own little terrarium in a Mason jar and learning



Maggie Sheehy-Zembruski arranges a display of candles that come with wildflower seeds that can be planted in the candle’s glass jar after the candle is burned. The candles are one of the many gift items you’ll find at Dundee Gardens on the Sans Souci Parkway.

how rabbits fit into the eco-system.

Those last three activities were all planned for Earth Day, with Dundee Gardens’ education director, Julie Fallon, eager to help kids have fun — and learn about nature at the same time.

“This is a praying mantis’ egg sac,” Fallon said, showing off a little bumble attached to a twig that she had found at Nescopeck State Park and intended to show the children. “Anywhere from 50 to 200 eggs could hatch, maybe as many as 500.”

When the eggs hatched, Fallon said, she intended to release them outdoors, where the mantises would eat many insects. “They’re wonderful pest control,” she said.

The educator was also taking care of a chrysalis, from which she expected a Luna moth to emerge in May. “They have such beautiful green wings,” she said, “and they only live for a few days. Their sole purpose is to reproduce. They don’t even have a mouth in that (moth) state.”

The make-a-bird-feeder

activity allowed children to decorate a recycled tin can and fill it with seeds, and the Mason jar terrarium gave them a chance to learn about condensation and water cycles as they layered small stones, sand, moss — plus, just for fun, an animal figurine — in the glass jars.

Similar activities are becoming popular for children’s birthday parties, Sheehy-Zembruski said, explaining parents can arrange a party at Dundee Gardens and bring the

See DUNDEE | 12



Aimee Dilger | Times Leader
Sue Reilly, executive director of the Family Business Alliance at Wilkes University and Penn State Scranton, says the membership-based organization serves as a resource, offering programs and networking to discuss issues unique to large and small family-owned businesses.

A resource for businesses not business as usual

By Jerry Lynott
jlynott@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — The question of “How was work today?” takes on a new meaning in a family business.

A job is more than that for many who have flesh-and-blood connections to their work. Just ask Sue Reilly, executive director of the Family Business Alliance at Wilkes University and Penn State Scranton.

“They have their own unique challenges, given that they are family businesses. So that it’s not a business that then you walk away from at 5 o’clock. It comes home to the dinner table and that conversation continues,” Reilly said.

Those conversations can be happening frequently and widely considering family businesses, big and small, account for two-thirds of all businesses around the world, a statistic Reilly attributed to John Davis of the Harvard Business School.

In the United States, approximately 5.5 million businesses are family-owned.

Their employees make up half of the country’s workforce and nearly as much a percentage of the gross national product, according to the FBA.

The same issues that affect family businesses affect all businesses, Reilly said. But working with a parent, sibling or relative creates a unique set of circumstances.

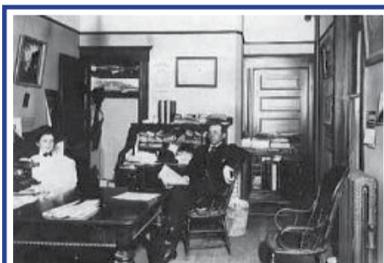
“In a business, you could be hired to do a task and fired if you didn’t,” Reilly said. But if you’re family, she said, the relationships create unique dynamics that could lead to difficult conversations.

Some problems can be solved in house, so to speak. But for other issues that are new or complex, the FBA might have the solution in the form of real-life experiences of members.

The FBA holds regular forums on business-related topics, tours local businesses and provides resources and networking opportunities. It’s been around for 20 years, moving to Wilkes in 2013 from its original home at King’s College. Penn State Scranton joined in 2017. Reilly’s a relative newcomer, coming over in late 2016 from Marywood University where

“**They have their own unique challenges, given that they are family businesses. So that it’s not a business that then you walk away from at 5 o’clock. It comes home to the dinner table and that conversation continues.**”
Sue Reilly

“**Their employees make up half of the country’s workforce and nearly as much a percentage of the gross national product, according to the FBA.**”
Sue Reilly



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Taking care of your messes



Bill Tarutis | Times Leader

Employees at Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply in Jessup take bed sheets for pressing.

Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply has been cleaning up NEPA for nearly 60 years

By Patrick Kernan | pkernan@timesleader.com

JESSUP — While surrounded by what seemed like miles and miles of equipment dedicated to sorting, washing, drying and finally shipping linens back to their customers, the president of

Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply summed up the company's mission rather succinctly.

"If it wasn't dirty, they wouldn't need us," P.J. Dempsey said.

For nearly 60 years, his family's company has been operating here in Northeastern Pennsylvania, providing laundry and other services to businesses.

The business was founded back in 1959 by P.J.'s father, Patrick. The elder Dempsey started the company just to do laundry, and started providing uniforms in 1980.

Originally based in Dunmore, the company eventually swapped one Scranton suburb for another when it moved to a larger plant in Jessup in 2005.

P.J. and his sister Kristin, the company's vice president, spoke to the Times Leader about where their success comes from.

And while they said there are a lot of facets to that success — such as their faithful employees and their focus on cutting edge laundry technology — they also said a lot of it comes down to luck.

"Our business is a good

barometer of the economy," P.J. said, noting that businesses could, if they felt so inclined, do their own laundry. "We're very valuable when they're focused on their own business."

The Dempseys acknowledge that theirs isn't the largest company of its sort, but do say that it's growing.

"Acquisition has been an avenue for growth," P.J. said, adding that they're always considering "one or two" other facilities.

Over time, Dempsey began scooping up other similar companies, and now has facilities based throughout this part of the Mid-Atlantic region, including in cities such as Harrisburg, Bethlehem and Baltimore.

Through these facilities, Dempsey is able to service most of the eastern half of Pennsylvania, along with parts of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia, in addition to



Sixteen-year employee Joe Pinto demonstrates how he monitors the distribution of floor mats using a cellphone at Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply in Jessup.

Washington, D.C.

However, all of the laundry is done right here in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Dempseys say that, each day, about eight full-sized tractor trailers are sent out from the Jessup location, delivering the laundry to other locations. Some of the trucks utilize a system of double-stacking containers in the trailer, so as to maximize the amount of product being shipped at once.

But this is far from the last innovation employed

by Dempsey.

As the siblings said, the company is obviously committed to automation. Dozens of machines are scattered around the factory floor, each one seemingly designed with convenience and efficiency in mind.

For example, after hundreds of napkins are run through washing machines and dryers taller than the average person, they're run through another sorting machine. This one uses imaging technology to

automatically tell if the napkins are clean, if need to be washed again or if they're damaged heavily enough that they need to be thrown out.

Virtually every step of the laundry process has been automated in similar ways, from conveyors that carry large laundry bags over head from one part of the floor to another, to chip technologies being implemented in uniforms that help keep all of the uniforms of an individual employee bundled together.

Many of these additions are housed in a new, \$10 million addition to the facility which helps house a positively gigantic washing machine which automatically pushes linens through multiple chambers of the machine.

Kristin said many of these innovations not only have the benefits of making work easier and decreasing overhead; they also make the operation far greener, cutting water use by a third.

Through this, Kristin says the company has been able to tap into a whole new workforce: millennials.

"Our clients don't always care if it's green, but this matters to a millennial workforce," she said, explaining that the company's commitment to being environmentally friendly has attracted younger workers to it.

But P.J. said, like many businesses, the workers are the backbone, whether they're millennials or not.

"Every business wants to have friendly, helpful people," he said. "But we make sure we have friendly, helpful people in an effective system."

Reach Patrick Kernan at 570-991-6386 or on Twitter @PatKernan



P.J. Dempsey, president of Dempsey Uniform & Linen Supply, follows the automated racks moving laundered uniforms at the facility in Jessup.

“Our business is a good barometer of the economy. We're very valuable when they're focused on their own business.”

P.J. Dempsey

“ I wouldn’t call it an overnight success. ”
Ours is more of a slow growth.

Chuck Cohen, Benco Dental managing director

NEPA helps family-owned Benco grow nationwide



Julie Radzyminski holds up a device used to scan teeth.

Company started as a ‘small dental distribution’ operation



Times Leader photo

Julie Radzyminski, vice president at Benco Dental, stands by a piece of state-of-the-art dental equipment in the company’s showroom in Pittston.

By Patrick Kernan | pkernan@timesleader.com

PITTSTON — If you’ve been to a dentist at some point in the past 90 years or so — and the odds of that are pretty good — you may have been worked on with supplies from Benco Dental.

Since 1930, the Pittston-based company has been faithfully serving the dentists of the area and, as time went on, eventually dentists all around the nation.

Chuck Cohen, the company’s managing director, said 1930 is when his grandfather moved to the Wyoming Valley from Philadelphia and set up shop with what Cohen called a “small dental distribution” operation.

Since then, the company has stayed local and family-owned, being operated by only three generations of Cohen’s family in the 88 years since its founding.

According to Cohen, Benco Dental has a 12 percent market share nationwide, meaning roughly three out of every 25 dentists around the country are supplied by products from Benco.

And if we’re talking about local dentists, that number ticks up closer to three out of every 10 dentists.

But Cohen said that it took some time to reach those numbers.

“I wouldn’t call it an overnight success,” Cohen said. “Ours is more of a slow growth.”

That growth began in the 1950s, when Benco first started servicing dentists outside of the immediate area. The company slowly grew from that point, eventually beginning to market to west coast dentists just this decade.

The company offers a wide array of supplies to dentists, including things the average person may not even consider.

Vice President of Innovation Julie Radzyminski showed a Times Leader reporter around part of the company’s showroom, which displayed an absolutely dizzying number of options dental professionals can pick from.

And some of it is pretty high tech. Radzyminski showed off no fewer



Times Leader photo

Julie Radzyminski is the vice president at family-owned Benco Dental in Pittston.

than three digital scanners, each similar to the size of a typical dental mirror, which are inserted into the mouth to create a scan of the patient’s tooth.

That means no more need to fill the patient’s mouth with an unpleasant moulding material.

Then, the image developed by the scanner can be transmitted to a second device which automatically creates the crown that will be used on the patient, instead of sending the mould off to a lab.

Radzyminski said this system allows dentists to fit patients for a crown and complete the procedure all in the same visit.

“It changes everything,” she said.

Radzyminski says Benco offers a

range of scanners and manufacturing devices. While she says the company does recommend a particular combination, the choice is ultimately up to the dentist themselves.

“They’re artists,” she said. “They’ll like how one feels better.”

Benco’s services don’t stop at the tools the dentist uses — they extend to the whole office.

Like a model home, Benco’s showroom is filled with mock offices, displaying the furnishings from which customers can choose. The company even sells the artwork you might see in your dentist’s office — one wall alone was filled with photos of famous professional athletes some dentist might choose for their office.

A dentist specializing in pediatrics could choose to fill their office with woodland creatures that can be brought to life through augmented reality on a smart phone app. Radzyminski said help relax a younger patient.

Radzyminski says dentists’ eyes light up when they see all the options available to them.

“They totally geek out,” she said with a laugh.

But what’s been the secret to all of this success for the company?

According to Cohen, a big part of it is this part of Pennsylvania.

“You have access to other markets, like New York, Philadelphia, Boston, but with a lot lower costs” he said.

But a lower cost of overhead isn’t the only upside to the Wyoming Valley.

“There’s just really good people,” he said. “Every business is a people business. We have 500 people who work with us, and we can’t run without those people.”

Cohen said Benco’s status as a family-owned company also helps its success, saying that in our market, being family-owned is actually an advantage. Cohen said Benco is the third largest dentistry supply company in this part of the country, but the largest one that’s independent and family-owned.

“We have terrific customers and a really good space,” he said. “I don’t think we would’ve seen the growth we’ve had if we weren’t headquartered here.”

Reach Patrick Kernan at 570-991-6386 or on Twitter @ PatKernan

Kindness, quality keys to success at Jack Williams

By Paul Sokoloski
psokoloski@timesleader.com

From a small store in Kingston, Bill Williams has grown his business into an expanding tire giant that has become the largest independent tire and auto dealer in Pennsylvania.

And he's not done building the Jack Williams Tire & Auto brand.

"We just want to continue to grow," said Bill Williams, the franchise's chairman, CEO and longtime leader of his family-owned and operated company, "as long as we're comfortable with the growth we have and we can control it. We've got a couple places under construction, a couple places we're looking at."

That expansion has changed the look of the old Jack Williams Tire and transformed the moderate tire store his father, Jack Williams, opened in Kingston with a \$500 loan from his father in 1929 into a 36-store conglomerate with more than 800 employees.

For proof of that, Jack Williams President Scott Williams, Bill's son, points to one room in the company's spacious corporate headquarters filled with monitors displaying orders from more than 5,000 customers in its territory — which includes service centers mainly in Pennsylvania and other warehouses in New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland.

In another part of the building, dozens of dots mark a map on another screen, tracking the progress of a stream of trucks en route to making deliveries through the eastern United States.

Just off the housing area, where some 130,000 tires are stored, a long row is filled with customer service personnel continually tied up taking phone requests for some 16



Scott, Tracey and Jason Williams pose in Jack Williams Tire & Auto warehouse in Moosic.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader



Customer service representatives man the phones at the Jack Williams tire call center.

tire brands Jack Williams carries.

That's lot of demand for a company that has sustained success and longevity for nearly 90 years.

"I think a lot of it is our pas-

sion for the business," said Jack Williams Vice President Jason Williams, also Bill's son. "We just stay up on the industry."

Their staying power has spurred a growth that has

moved the company's main building around.

The Jack Williams corporate headquarters went from Kingston during its formative years to its current home in Avoca in 1988.

But it has also re-enforced the loyalty and devotion Jack Williams Tire and Auto has always shown, along with its intent to remain centered in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"We've had no reason to move our headquarters," said Bill Williams, who lives in Larksville with his wife, Sandi. "We've kept expanding the whole way. But this is where we live. This is where our families are. There's no reason to move from the area."

Well, they did move that

once, taking a short ride up the road from the Wyoming Valley's West Side in 1988 to set up shop just off Interstate 81. But that was, as Bill Williams described it, a natural progression to help generate opportunity.

"We relocated to grow the business," Bill Williams said. "We wanted to get between the Scranton and Wilkes-Barre market and get better access to the highway. It was just a logical move."

Since then, Jack Williams Tire & Auto opened a 10th location in the Wyoming Valley and Bill Williams has relinquished much of the day-to-day operations to his children Scott, Jason and Tracey

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Artful service to furniture buyers

Third-generation owner provides unique experience to customers



Ronne Kurlancheek and her dog Dolly pose for a photo in the Kurlancheek Home Furnishings showroom in Wilkes-Barre Township. Kurlancheek's hands-on approach to selecting furniture and consulting her customer base allows her to compete with less personal corporate stores. Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

By Matt Mattei | mmattei@timesleader.com

Ronne Kurlancheek has vivid memories of growing up in her parents' furniture store in Duryea. "It was my playground," she said, seated comfortably inside her Wilkes-Barre Township store, Kurlancheek Home Furnishings.

"Until one day, I was jumping on the mattresses and ripped one. Then I wasn't allowed near them for a while. One time, I fell into the loading dock, and that's the day I learned about recycling."

Now the third-generation owner of her family business takes pride in providing unique, often one-of-a-kind furniture to her customers at a discounted price, and she looks back on those early experiences in her "playground" as the beginning of her education in the industry.

"I didn't think I was learning anything, but I was learning about customer service, just by what my parents did, how they treated a disgruntled customer and how they handled a pleasant customer."

The original Duryea store was opened by Kurlancheek's grandfather, Jacob Kurlancheek, in 1898, and became known as an establishment that served working-class people.

"Coal miners would pay off pieces of furniture \$5 at a time, and my grandfather would pick up payments in a horse and buggy," Kurlancheek said. "People bought good furniture back then because

"I didn't think I was learning anything, but I was learning about customer service, just by what my parents did, how they treated a disgruntled customer and how they handled a pleasant customer."

Ronne Kurlancheek

you bought it for life."

After being raised with the industry all around her, Kurlancheek attended college in New York City, majoring in textile design and interior design.

"I had no intention of getting into the family business at that point," she said. "After graduation, I came home and had no idea what to do. I started making silver jewelry in a studio space my parents allowed me to

work in."

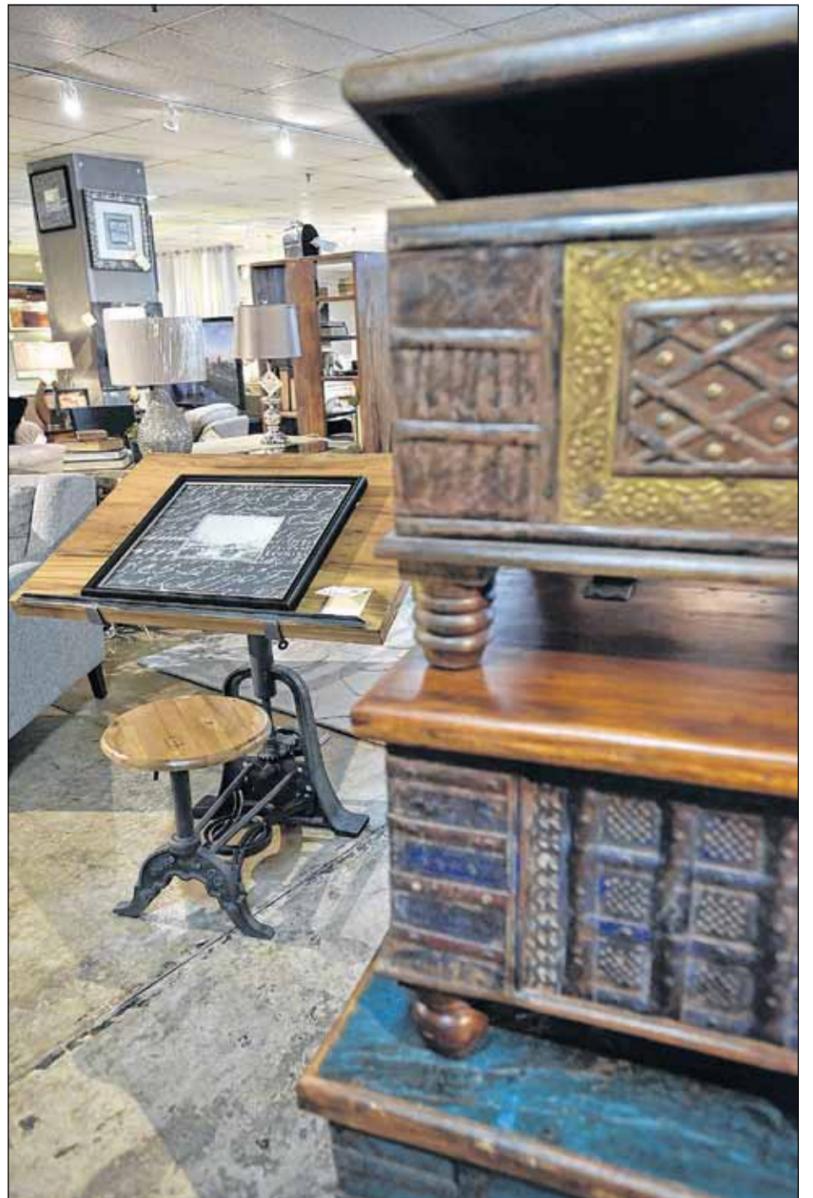
Then one day, Kurlancheek's father was down a sales person and made his daughter fill in out of necessity.

"I sold a couple an entire special order living room, and I was thrilled," she said. "It was an instant sense of accomplishment."

When Kurlancheek broke into the industry full time, it was 1980, and the working climate was not favorable to women in any industry, which Kurlancheek said, motivated her to work harder than her male counterparts.

"You had to be tougher and stronger than the men you were dealing with, because you had so much working against you," she said.

At the time, Kurlancheek and her brother, Paul, were partners and decided to expand the business to four locations that sold predominantly Broyhill furniture, which Kurlancheek described as "very mainstream" and "middle end."



Kurlancheek offers one-of-a-kind furniture, like these taka boxes made from reclaimed pieces of Indonesian houses, foreground, and this draftsman's table, background. Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

"We were pretty much like any store, but more kooky and fun," she said. "And that's when Ray-

mour & Flanigan came into the area. They were gigantic and powerful, and we had no idea how

to compete." Kurlancheek's brother,

See FURNITURE | 11

A unique piece of furniture uses a bicycle as part of the base for this side table. Kurlancheek Home Furnishings owner Ronne Kurlancheek travels to various furniture shows to select individual pieces, and even buys from local artists like Exeter-based furniture maker Enrico Bartolini.



Kurlancheek offers a variety of furniture made from reclaimed wood.

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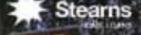
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Karin Lazarowicz, of Shickshinny, is examined by Dr. Anthony Silvetti at the Northeast Sight Services in Exeter.

Tony Callaio | For Times Leader

Northeast Sight Services celebrating 100 years of helping visually impaired

By Geri Gibbons | For Times Leader

EXETER – Northeast Sight Services is celebrating its 100th year not only with a new name but with an array of new services which benefit members of the community who are visually impaired.

President and CEO Sara Gorgone Peperno said the organization's previous name, the Greater Wilkes-Barre Association for the Blind, had become outdated and inaccurate.



Amy Feldman, director of development at Northeast Sight Services, checks a section of the organization's Vision Resource Center devoted to children.

"We serve several counties, and we serve clients from Upper Luzerne County and from areas of Wyoming, Wayne and Pike counties," she said. "Most importantly, we serve not only the blind, but also those with visual impairment."

Both Gorgone Peperno and Amy Feldman, director of development, are at the helm of the organization which has embraced change and growth in order to better the lives of its clients.

Both are especially excited about the organization's renovated Vision Resource Center, which they say is a one-stop shop for practical tools that enhance work, home life and leisure.

Staff from Northeast Sight Services walk clients of all ages through the process of choosing devices and aids that will be most helpful to them.

"Some of our clients prefer using high tech tools to assist them in daily living," Gorgone

See SIGHT | 11



The mission of the Northeast Sight Services is to help blind and visually impaired individuals achieve the best possible quality of life by providing compassionate services and to prevent vision loss through education and early detection for people of all ages.

Founded in 1918, Northeast Sight Services is a nonprofit organization that serves Northeast Pennsylvania, including Luzerne, Wyoming, Wayne, and Pike counties.

Its Social Service programs are offered to individuals who are legally

blind or have low vision, which is defined as having a visual acuity of 20/70 or worse in the better eye with best correction or a corresponding field loss. With the goal of improving the quality of one's life and maintaining his/her independence, the Northeast Sight Services offers the following services:

- Adjustment to Vision Loss
- In-Home Support
- Independent Living and Social Events

Its Prevention of Blindness programs

are offered to people of all ages and demographics. These programs are focused on helping prevent blindness locally:

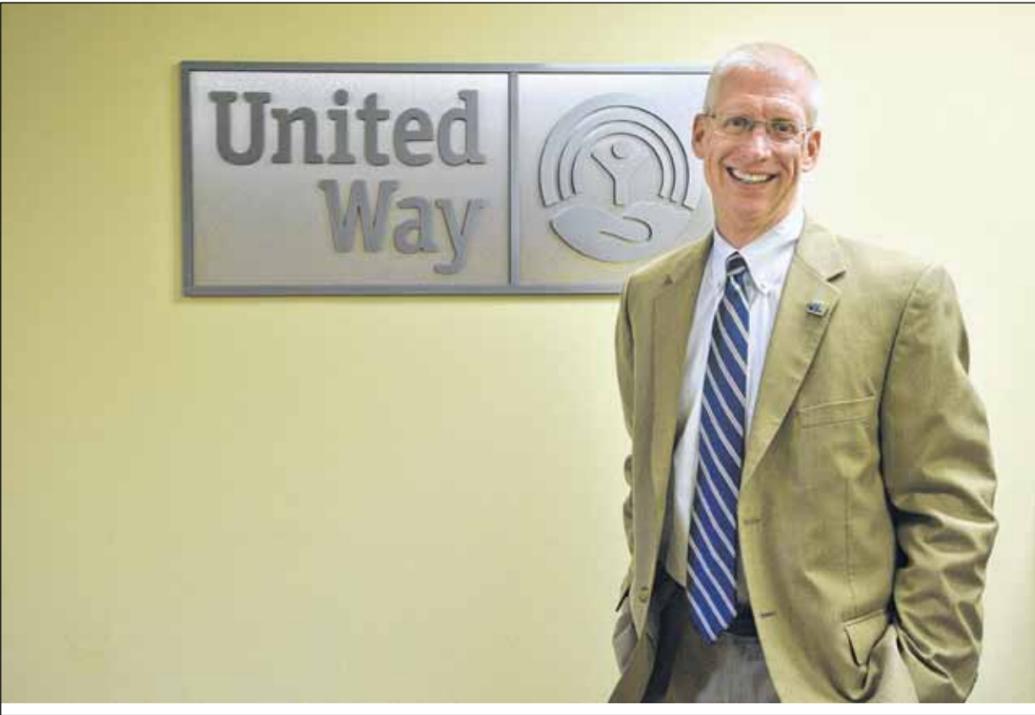
- Vision Screenings (for both children and adults)
- Eye Health & Safety Education programs (for both children and adults)

The Marilyn Moore Maslow Vision Resource Center ensures that individuals in our local communities have access to sight, whether it be

through a high-powered magnifier from the Vision Resource Center or a basic pair of affordable prescription frames.

InSight Kids Club of NEPA is program organized in partnership with Community Services for Sight for blind and visually impaired children to get together and enjoy both recreational and instructional opportunities as a group.

- Camp Sight
- Transition Assistance
- Monthly Children's Programs



Bill Jones is president and CEO of the United Way of Wyoming Valley.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Jones, United Way fight childhood poverty

By Marcella Kester
For Times Leader

Bill Jones grew up in Plymouth in a family of both love and discipline. He was the second-born son of Bell Telephone employee Marie Ann and U.S. Marine Joseph “Red” Jones, who was also well-known throughout the community as a basketball coach and square-dance caller. While the family didn’t have lavish luxuries, they were able to live comfortably as his parents strived to make the fullest lives possible for their four children.

One trait Jones said he inherited from his parents was a love of basketball.

“I think my father put a basketball in my hands minutes after I was born,” he said.

As a matter-of-fact, it was basketball that decided Jones’ college.

After graduating from Lake-Lehman High School (the family moved after the Agnes Flood), he decided to attend King’s College, but a recruiter from then-College Misericordia persuaded him to go there instead to play basketball for the school.

Jones remained at Misericordia, where he graduated with a degree in business management and marketing in 1985, later earning his MBA in finance from Wilkes University. He continues to have a personal connection to Misericordia and, in many ways, said that the school molded him into the person he is today.

“Going to Misericordia turned out to be a great decision for me and, to this day, I am grateful for all that I learned, the experiences I had, and the opportunities I was given,” he said. “The campus has changed a lot since then, but the mission of the institution and the values of the Sisters of Mercy have not.”

Jones started his career in banking with First Eastern Bank and remained there for 15 years. As he moved up the corporate ladder, he found himself leaning toward charitable work, taking seats on boards such as the Volunteers of America and assisting in founding the Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity.



Sean McKeag file photo | Times Leader

President of United Way of Wyoming Valley Bill Jones reads a story to a class at Dobson Elementary School in Wilkes-Barre for Read Across America.

It was then that he said he discovered his life’s purpose.

“I really enjoyed it and the bank treated me very well. Over time, however, I discovered that I really wanted my life’s work to be about helping people in need,” he said, once again citing the influence Misericordia and the Sisters of Mercy had on him.

When the position of CEO opened at the United Way in 2011, Jones jumped at the opportunity. He was hired as the organization’s chief in January of 2012 and hasn’t looked back.

Since the United Way changed their focus to childhood poverty, Jones described some troubles and triumphs along the way.

Some organizations didn’t like the change; however, Jones felt confident in the level of success that could be reached through the United Way’s “Poverty to Possibility” program.

Through his work he has been placed in a position to be on the receiving end of both heart-wrenching and heart-warming stories about how the organization has changed the lives of area residents.

“Over the past year, there have been at least

three agencies that have formally recognized the value of our work together and how our new model is influencing positive change,” he said. “Another partner recently documented how a new initiative very literally saved a life. “That’s powerful.”

One misconception Jones would like to address is the amount of work that goes into what he and the United Way do, as well as how difficult it is to keep an organization going.

Despite the criticism he can sometimes get, he and the United Way of Wyoming Valley are proud to have recently merged with the Berwick Area United Way in an effort to better serve the overall area.

“The criticisms we get are largely from people who don’t understand the complexity and difficulty of our work,” he said. “I would invite anyone who has concerns about the United Way or who won’t support our work today because of negative experiences in the past to call me. If you have criticisms but really care about and want to support our community, let’s meet and have a respectful conversation. “I’ll buy the coffee and

we can learn from each other.”

As for his life outside of the office, Jones recently celebrated his 24th wedding anniversary with his wife, Janet, and two children.

He cherishes the closeness of his family, as well as his love for chocolate.

Reach the Times Leader newsroom at 570-829-7242 or on Twitter @TLnews.

Red Cross another opportunity to serve

By Geri Gibbons
For Times Leader

WILKES-BARRE — Bill Goldsworthy has been acting as executive director of the Red Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania since 2015, but he has been serving the community throughout his life.

And although the organization’s mission of disaster relief is certainly a serious one, Goldsworthy injects humor and friendship into the position, even as he arrives at his desk each morning at the organizations center in Wilkes-Barre.

“I always have a bowl of candy, pretzels, on my desk, and I tell people the door is always open,” he said. “So that our volunteers get to know me.”

Goldsworthy detailed the organization’s quick response to recent nor’easters that found many area residents without power, especially those in the Pocono area.

He emphasized that both volunteers and paid staff seamlessly shifted their efforts from our area to the Poconos in the biggest response since Hurricane Sandy in 2011.

But effective disaster management isn’t a matter of simply effective response, he said, it’s a matter of remaining prepared and providing others the education and means to be prepared.

He enthusiastically grabs a pillowcase from the organization’s Pillowcase Project, which prepared children ages 8 to 11 for disasters.

“It’s their pillowcase, they can draw on it,” he said. “And it reminds them what to take with them in a disaster to fill the pillowcase – not toys, but a change of clothes, toothbrush and toothpaste, a snack.”

The center is also a hub for area residents to be certified in CPR and first aid, so they can go back out in the community prepared to respond effectively should they experience an emergency in their workplace, homes or out in the community.

He is quick to credit volunteers with making the organization, which he called the “largest unfunded federal mandate,” run properly.

“We only have five paid staff here,” he said. “It’s the volunteers.”

Goldsworthy, served as mayor of West Pittston for 14 years and spent three decades at Golden Business Machines.

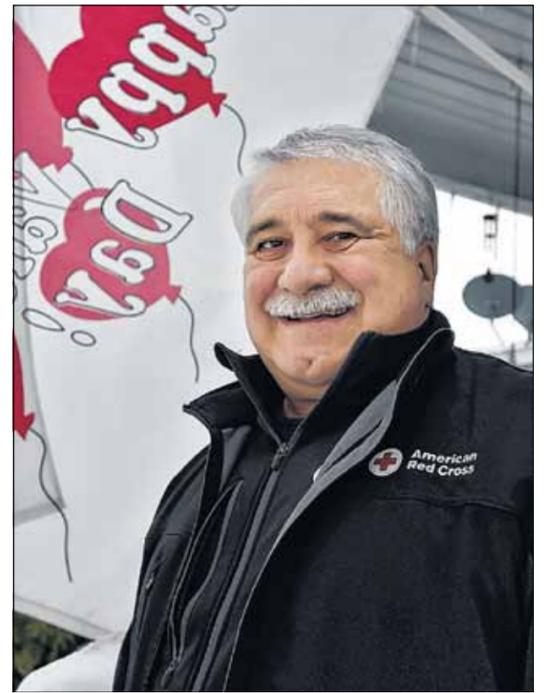
He is an Eagle Scout and volunteer firefighter, and serves on several local boards.

When he was asked to serve as executive director, he was aware that it would be a decrease in salary, but his children had grown and he was in a position to be able to earn a bit less.

To Goldsworthy, it was the perfect time, the perfect job, the perfect opportunity to serve in yet another way.

“Being here at the Red Cross seems to be a perfect fit,” he said.

Reach the Times Leader newsroom at 570-829-7242 or on Twitter @TLnews.



Times Leader file photo

Bill Goldsworthy has been head of the Red Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania since 2015.

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Opportunities abound at state parks

By Tom Venesky
tvenesky@timesleader.com

The three state parks in Luzerne County have more than 58 miles of hiking trails, combined.

There is plenty of room to walk, but that's not all there is to do at the state parks.

Nescopeck, Ricketts Glen and Frances Slocum state parks are diverse natural areas that offer activities reflecting each park's unique qualities.

At Ricketts Glen, for example, visitors can enjoy the Glens Natural Area, which includes the Falls Trails System that winds past 22 waterfalls. The highest of the watery displays is the 94-foot Ganoga Falls, which is surrounded by old growth forest.

Frances Slocum is popular for its 165-acre lake, picnic areas and trails that are open to mountain biking.

And at Nescopeck, visitors can explore 3,550 acres of diverse wildlife habitats, fish in Lake Frances and Nescopeck Creek or enjoy one of the numerous nature programs at the environmental education center.

Diane Madl, environmental education specialist supervisor with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, said the variety of recreation opportunities has generated quite a following at each park.

"We try to offer programs and activities consistently every month to reach different audiences," she said. "Some people come in and stay



A kayaker paddles along the shore of Frances Slocum Lake. The 165-acre lake is popular with boaters and anglers and is located in the Back Mountain.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader



Birder Dave Krueel, of Pittsville, leads a group on a bird walk during WinterFest 2017 at Nescopeck State Park. A variety of natural habitats and plenty of hiking trails make the park a popular place with wildlife enthusiasts.

Bill Tarutis | For Times Leader

for the weekend, while at Nescopeck we typically attract local residents who want to try something different."

One of the most popular activities at all three

state parks is the monthly hiking series, which is now in its 10th year.

Park staff lead participants on a different hike every month, highlighting a particular trails in

a state park or on other public property, such as game lands.

"There's no shortage of places to go," Madl said. "The goal of the hiking series is to get people outdoors to exercise, learn about natural history and explore the public lands we have."

For those that want to do more than walk, there are plenty of other activities offered through DCNR's Get Outdoors PA program. Created in 2012, the program offers an opportunity to try backpacking, biking, birding, cross-country skiing, fishing and kayaking, among other activities.

Madl said Get Outdoors PA is offered as

"introductory programs" and if people like particular activity they can pursue it further.

"We provide the equipment and they can try it out. We do it in a relaxed setting and teach them techniques and how the equipment works," Madl said. "It's something people can try before making the decision to purchase equipment on their own."

Kayaking programs fill up every time they're offered, according to Madl, and the spring bird watching hikes attract upwards of 30 people.

Still, with several lakes and streams on the three state parks in the county, fishing remains one of the most popular activities.

As a result, Madl said, the parks have plenty of programs to tap into the interest in angling.

At Frances Slocum, the Back Mountain Police Association hold a trout derby every spring for kids. In addition, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission stocks trout in the lake, which also holds healthy populations of bass, panfish and even enormous muskie.

At Nescopeck, Lake Frances and a 6-mile stretch of Nescopeck Creek are also stocked with trout.

And the 245-acre Lake Jean at Ricketts Glen, which was recently re-filled following repair work to the dam, is a popular spot for panfish and ice anglers in the winter.

When it comes to trout, however, fly fishing is a popular activity. At Nescopeck, the park partners with the Western Pocono Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the PFBC to hold various programs designed to get people into fishing.

And they all draw a crowd.

A recent Introduction to Fly Fishing program at Nescopeck was so popular that there was a waiting list, Madl said.

Whether it's fishing, kayaking, hiking or geocaching, the three state parks in Luzerne County offer a seemingly endless array of opportunities.

"We're trying to cover all the bases," Madl said. "Everything we do focuses on recreation with a conservation message."



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Tony Callaio | For Times Leader
Sara Gorgone Peperno, left, president/CEO Northeast Sight Services, and Amy Feldman, director of development, stand in the newly designed Vision Resource Center in Exeter.

Sight

From page 8

Peperno said. "And some prefer simple solutions."

She contrasted a younger person utilizing an iPad with an enlarged screen, to another, perhaps older person, simply using a rubberband wrapped around a shampoo bottle to differentiate it from conditioner.

For those who prefer high tech, a device available at the center called a Colorino identifies colors so that those with visual impairment can match their clothing.

Others simply learn how to attach tags to their clothing to help them color coordinate.

Gorgone Peperno said she is inspired by older people who come to the center who have recently developed visual impairment, but are determined to continue to live their lives to the fullest.

"We have one man who is over 90 in a new program called Orientation and Mobility," she said. "And he wants to learn all he can about how to

master the challenges of low vision."

The organization also provides tools to prevent vision loss and enhance vision, which include vision screenings and educational presentations to school-age children.

Both Feldman and Gorgone Peperno work to find ways to change the scope of the organization – to reach more people in need and ensure they receive vital services.

"Since starting at Northeast Sight Services, we spent a lot of time evaluating every aspect of the organization to see what was working and what wasn't," said Feldman. "Over time, changes were made and we continually look to enhance and expand important services."

Last year, the organization served about 6,000 people.

Both Feldman and Gorgone Peperno credit their staff, who they say work as a true team embracing a collaborative spirit, for making everyday successes possible.

Reach the Times Leader newsroom at 570-829-7242 or on Twitter @TLnews.

Furniture

From page 5

who she said wasn't in love with the industry, decided he was finished, and she didn't want to run the stores by herself, so the siblings closed their branches and Ronne went back to school.

When she returned to her family's namesake, she went to work in the flagship store, which had moved to Exeter, and managed the warehouse under the ownership of Lou Domiano, but in 2005, she bought the business back from Domiano and has since devised a business plan that not only survives in the era of corporate furniture stores but also sets Kurlancheek Home Furnishings apart from those franchised outlets.

The Wilkes-Barre Township store has a funky, artsy vibe that is as much akin to a gallery as it is a furniture retailer.

"We never put tables, or a sofa and loveseat that match together," Kurlancheek said. "We love doing the opposite of our competition. Kurlancheek can survive on everyone the big box stores have annoyed."

Kurlancheek and her architect

I like the area. My family is in the area, and the valley has evolved. People are into doing artsy things, so we can do that here as opposed to having to move to a place like New York to do that.

Ronne Kurlancheek

husband, Joel Zitofsky, travel together to places like the High Point Market trade show in North Carolina to personally select individual pieces, and Kurlancheek keeps a mental catalog of everything in her store.

"We pick up everything from seeing it," she said. "Everything has a story, and I remember it. I also try to buy from local artists when I can."

Recently displayed items include a table made from an antique Chinese ox cart, taka boxes made from reclaimed pieces of Indonesian houses, and a table with a base constructed from a vintage bicycle.

In addition to unique furniture, Kurlancheek offers a rare experi-

ence. In-house designers will provide in-home consultations for customers who aren't sure of what they want, and delivery people will move furniture around a customer's home until the patron is satisfied.

"We employ artsy, friendly people here," Kurlancheek said motioning toward designer Pam Fendrock. "She's one of our wonderful, talented designers."

Kurlancheek said she and her employees move one-third of the sale floor around every three weeks, giving it a fresh look for regular customers who like to visit monthly.

And as she continues in her grandfather's tradition of finding "anything at the right price," she reflects on what keeps her and her legacy business in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"I like the area. My family is in the area, and the valley has evolved," she said. "People are into doing artsy things, so we can do that here as opposed to having to move to a place like New York to do that."

At the heart of Kurlancheek's work is an artful take on her craft.

"I walk into someone's house, and I see it done," she said. "It's amazing, and I still think it's fun and different every year."

FBA

From page 1

she was director of Professional Continuing Education and the school's workforce education program.

The 20th anniversary program at Mohegan Sun Pocono on May 15 will feature James Kane, whose research on loyalty to an individual, organization or cause has been used by major corporations, as the keynote speaker.

"You are welcome to join us for one session and check us out. And then it is by membership," Reilly said.

The FBA has three membership categories and corresponding annual fees:

- Firms with 10 or fewer employees, \$500.
- Firms with 10 or more employees, \$1,200.
- Sustaining members, \$2,000.

Benefits include tuition discounts, between 15 percent to 20 percent depending on the membership level, at Wilkes for full-time employees and their immediate family members, discounts on non-credit certificate programs and camps at Penn State, and unlimited participation in FBA events.

"It's an investment,"

Reilly said. "But you cannot get, you cannot send your employees out for this level of training, this many opportunities for the cost of membership."

Wilkes and Penn State partner in the FBA with the major sponsors, Baker Tilly accounting and advisory services, M&T Bank and the law firm of Rosenn Jenkins & Greenwald.

"They provide program resources and resources for our membership on all sort of questions," Reilly said. "We have legal, accounting and banking. But also Baker Tilly has human resources. And so there's a lot of resources right here."

The schools look to get their students involved too, Reilly said, adding "if there are internship opportunities within our family businesses that we can fill with Wilkes students, that would be great."

The FBA surveys members for program topics, Reilly said. Other ideas are developed from talking with members about their needs. The question-and-answer period of a program can turn out to be fertile ground for future discussions.

"Because it needs to be a resource, a timely resource for the members," Reilly said.

Reach Jerry Lynott at 570-991-6120 or on Twitter @TLJerryLynott.

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<div style="text-align: center;"> <h3>NEW 2018 FORD FOCUS S</h3> <p>0% OR PLUS 7.24 \$4,648</p> <p>Air, PL, PW, Tilt Wheel, Side Air Curtains, Airbags, CD, Remote Keyless Entry, SYNC, Rear Camera Anti-Theft Sys., Rear Defroster</p> <table style="width: 100%; font-size: 0.8em;"> <tr><td>Was</td><td>\$19,830</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD REBATE</td><td>\$4,000</td></tr> <tr><td>COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP</td><td>\$648</td></tr> </table> <p>40 MPG</p> <p>Lease For \$149 ²⁴ Mos. \$15,182</p> <p>50 FOCUSES AVAILABLE</p> <p><small>*Taxes, Tags, And Doc Fee Extra. Security deposit waived. All factory rebates applied including Off Lease Rebate. **Lease payments based on 24 month lease 21,000 allowable miles. \$645 Bank Fee, and \$2,500 down payment (cash or trade) due at delivery. Sale ends 04/30/2018</small></p> </div>	Was	\$19,830	FORD REBATE	\$4,000	COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP	\$648	<div style="text-align: center;"> <h3>ALL NEW FOR 2018 FORD ECO SPORT S AWD</h3> <p>0% OR PLUS 4.89 \$1,250</p> <p>ALL WHEEL DRIVE, 2.0 GDI I4 Engine, 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, PW/PL, ABS, Rear View Camera, Compact SUV</p> <table style="width: 100%; font-size: 0.8em;"> <tr><td>WAS</td><td>\$22,600</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD REBATE</td><td>\$500</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD BONUS REBATE</td><td>\$500</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD LEASE RENEWAL REBATE</td><td>\$750</td></tr> <tr><td>COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP</td><td>\$507</td></tr> </table> <p>Lease For \$169 ²⁴ Mos. \$20,343</p> <p><small>*Taxes, Tags, And Doc Fee Extra. Security deposit waived. All factory rebates applied. **Lease payments based on 24 month lease 21,000 allowable miles. \$645 Bank Fee, and \$2,500 down payment (cash or trade) due at delivery. Sale ends 04/30/2018</small></p> </div>	WAS	\$22,600	FORD REBATE	\$500	FORD BONUS REBATE	\$500	FORD LEASE RENEWAL REBATE	\$750	COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP	\$507	<div style="text-align: center;"> <h3>NEW 2018 FORD ESCAPE SE AWD</h3> <p>0% OR PLUS 6.09 \$1,750</p> <p>ALL WHEEL DRIVE, 1.5L EcoBoost, SYNC, Sirius Satellite Radio, 17" Alloy Wheels, Advance Trac w/Stability Control, PW/PL, ABS, Perimeter Alarm, Rear View Camera, Remote Keyless Entry System.</p> <table style="width: 100%; font-size: 0.8em;"> <tr><td>Was</td><td>\$28,045</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD REBATE</td><td>\$1,500</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD RETAIL BONUS REBATE</td><td>\$1,000</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD LEASE RENEWAL REBATE</td><td>\$750</td></tr> <tr><td>COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP</td><td>\$1,175</td></tr> </table> <p>33 MPG</p> <p>Lease For \$199 ²⁴ Mos. \$23,620</p> <p><small>*Taxes, Tags, And Doc Fee Extra. Security deposit waived. All factory rebates applied. **Lease payments based on 24 month lease 21,000 allowable miles. \$645 Bank Fee, and \$2,500 down payment (cash or trade) due at delivery. Sale ends 04/30/2018</small></p> </div>	Was	\$28,045	FORD REBATE	\$1,500	FORD RETAIL BONUS REBATE	\$1,000	FORD LEASE RENEWAL REBATE	\$750	COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP	\$1,175	<div style="text-align: center;"> <h3>NEW 2018 FORD FUSION S</h3> <p>0% OR PLUS 7.24 \$1,500</p> <p>2.5L Auto., CD, 16" Steel Wheels, Tilt, PW, PDL, Safety Pkg., Side Impact Air Bags, 1st and 2nd Air Curtains, Anti-Theft Sys., CD, SYNC, Message Center, Cruise Control, Keyless Entry, Auto. Headlamps</p> <table style="width: 100%; font-size: 0.8em;"> <tr><td>Was</td><td>\$22,995</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD REBATE</td><td>\$2,000</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD LEASE RENEWAL</td><td>\$1,000</td></tr> <tr><td>FORD BONUS REBATE</td><td>\$500</td></tr> <tr><td>COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP</td><td>\$951</td></tr> </table> <p>Lease For \$199 ³⁶ Mos. \$18,544</p> <p>with \$199 Down</p> <p><small>*Taxes, Tags, And Doc Fee Extra. Security deposit waived. All factory rebates applied including Off Lease Rebate. **Lease payments based on 36 month lease 31,500 allowable miles. \$645 Bank Fee due at delivery. Sale ends 04/30/2018</small></p> </div>	Was	\$22,995	FORD REBATE	\$2,000	FORD LEASE RENEWAL	\$1,000	FORD BONUS REBATE	\$500	COCCIA DISCOUNT OFF MSRP	\$951																						
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Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Dundee Gardens carries a wide range of products for the home and garden, as well as gifts ranging from clothing to mulling spices to cutting boards.

Dundee

From page 1

children and refreshments while Dundee supplies the educator and craft supplies.

Those activities may well inspire a lifelong appreciation for the natural environment, which could bring the young partiers back to Dundee Gardens many times in their lives.

This is where they can find seedlings and saplings, flowers and herbs, rustic home decor and even such items as a woven bracelet, soaked in citronella and peppermint oil, that serves as a natural repellent of mosquitoes and other insects.

There are locally pro-

duced foods, including Razz's Shagbark Hickory Syrup, made in Larksville, and The Good Hive seasonal raw honey from Mountain Top, and folks with an eye toward adding natural sweetness to their lives might pick up a copy of "Naturally Sweet Food in Jars" by Marisa McClellan, which contains such recipes as jam made with honey and ketchup made with maple syrup.

The store welcomes experienced gardeners; you know the type. They might stroll up to a houseplant commonly known as kitten fur, telling themselves, "Ah, yes, I think I'll buy some *Cyanotis somaliensis* today." Just as welcome are the people who are more

likely to reach for a copy of "How Not to Kill Your Houseplant: Survival Tips for the Horticulturally Challenged," a book by Veronica Peerless that was recently displayed on a counter at Dundee.

Either group might be charmed by the 100-piece "flower alphabet" jigsaw puzzle that offers A for Azalea and Z for zinnia. And they might find it hard to resist a two-gifts-in-one type of candle that comes with wildflower seeds; after you've burned the candle, you plant the seeds in the glass container and, within a few weeks, you watch the wildflowers bloom.

People of all ages are eager to learn more about the natural world around

them, Sheehy-Zembruski said, and she's proud to be the latest generation of her family to help the community do that.

The business was established by her grandparents, Edward and Margaret Walkonis, in 1949 and her parents, William and Mary Sheehy, purchased it a generation later and ran it for 40 years. Sheehy-Zembruski and her husband bought the business five years ago and moved into her childhood homestead with their elementary-age children, William and Charlotte.

"My daughter has the same bedroom I used to have," Sheehy-Zembruski said.

Reach Mary Therese Biebel at 570-991-6109 or on Twitter @BiebelMT

Williams

From page 4

Williams DeRocco, who is also a company vice president.

Together, they've developed a simple approach while acquiring a reputation of reliability and a secret to sustaining the success that has helped Jack Williams Tire & Auto remain the leading tire distributor in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"It's all about the customer," Bill Williams said, "and just surrounding yourself with good people. It's all about the people. You do what you have to do to take care of your customers. It's about just taking care of your employees and your customers."

The right way. The Williams way.

That's the marketing slogan Jack Williams Tire & Auto began using during an ad campaign in 2016.

The third-generation Williams children try to live by it.

For all of them, there was really no choice.

"All of us sort of grew up in the business," said Jason Williams, who said he once considered other career opportunities but found himself drawn to the tire and auto business. "We definitely weren't forced. My first job was mounting tires, loading docks."

"We all learned from the ground up," Tracey Williams DeRocco said.

Maybe their drive for the business was in their blood from the time they were born.

"I worked in it while I was going through school," Bill Williams said. "I liked it. I had no other reason to go anywhere else. They (his children) all worked with me, during school and during college. It's the only place they have ever worked."

The needs of their customers and the quality of tires have changed over the years.

"You see a lot of bigger tires, narrow sidewalls," Jason Williams said. "A lot of it is performance-oriented. A lot of safety improvements, too, for handling. Then you have high-performance (tires) for faster vehicles."

Through it all, the performance of Jack Williams Tire & Auto has remained the same.

"This is where we all grew up," Scott Williams said. "For us, this is it."

Reach Paul Sokoloski at 570-829-7143 or on Twitter @TLSports

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Celebrating Dazzling, Healthy Smiles For 20 Years!

Meet two talented dentists who continually bring advances in general and cosmetic dentistry to the communities of beautiful Northeast Pennsylvania.

Chas "Dr. Chas" Carpenter, DMD, and his father Charles Carpenter, DMD, proudly combine their individual interests and strengths in dental medicine to offer their patients the best in leading-edge, comprehensive care.

Both are graduates of the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine and have completed continuing education courses at the world-renowned Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies.

The staff of Carpenter Dental, including office manager Elaine Carpenter, understands how important it is to have a confident smile, not just for appearance's sake, but for overall health and proper nutrition.

Forward Thinking

"I was a 'dental phobic' as a child," confides Dr. Carpenter. "Here, we want patients to feel comfortable, relaxed, and safe. Staying current with the newest technology and best practices help us do that."

Dentistry has made terrific strides, and the introduction of the dental laser is a good example.

"I call it my 'magic wand,'" laughs Dr. Carpenter, who has obtained



Dr. Chas Carpenter and Dr. Charles Carpenter

Mastership status in the World Clinical Laser Institute and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Laser Dentistry. "I can treat the hard tissue of teeth and bones, as well as the soft tissue of the mouth, including successfully treating periodontal disease and tongue-tied children. The laser can reduce discomfort, bleeding, and procedural time, making it especially useful for our youngest patients who need tooth decay removed prior to having a filling placed."

Smile Makeovers

"It's important to first assure the health of your mouth before you invest in cosmetic work," advises Dr. Chas, a member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. "In our practice, we strive to have well-informed patients who make wise decisions and take good care of their teeth and gums so that restorations last."

Dr. Chas enjoys working with a patient who wants to "replace what's been lost during the aging process or has worn away." He considers facial contours and details such as how the lips frame the teeth before he designs a treatment plan.

"Well-modeled cosmetic restorations can act as a dental facelift for patients and give them a more youthful, attractive smile," he says.

Welcome to the Family

"It all comes down to a commitment to what is best for each patient," emphasizes Dr. Carpenter. "We hope we've communicated to our patients over the years that their dental health and their satisfaction with the results of our work are of paramount importance."

"Our goals are healthy gums, well-aligned jaws and bites, and beautiful smiles," agrees Dr. Chas.

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Health care providers expanding in NEPA

Expansion shows Commonwealth commitment to area

By Geri Gibbons
For Times Leader

WILKES-BARRE — The unveiling of a \$40 million expansion of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital's Intensive Care Unit earlier this year is a testament to Commonwealth Health's commitment to continuing to offer quality healthcare services to area residents and to its continuing growth, according to Chief Executive Officer Cornelio Catena.

The state-of-the-art intensive care and cardiovascular unit, deemed the "ICU tower," added two stories to the structure of the hospital and now provides 34 rooms for patient intensive care.

The project also included the addition of another helipad to the hospital's existing one.

Another addition to the hospital is a Navio robot-assisted system for knee replacement to the orthopedic surgery department, which does hip, knee, shoulder and spine surgery.

The hospital's orthopedic department, which offers "care for the parts that keep you moving," includes care for a wide variety of conditions ranging from arthritis to sports injuries to stress-related injuries.

Catena said that much of the hospital's growth and expansion had nothing to do with bricks-and-mortar, but rather with attracting quality primary care doctors and specialists to the health care system, focusing on both technology and expertise of those providing care to patients.

For example, the hospital has added highly qualified surgeons and physicians to it Level II Trauma Center.

The hospital has also upgraded the scope of its GI services, both in numbers served and types of procedure offering.

According to Catena, plans to remodel and expand the hospital's GI suite are in the works.

The hospital also operates a rapid crisis response center, which addresses those in a mental health crisis, providing stabilization during a stay of up to 72 hours.

Another improvement to the healthcare system is the addition of "InQuicker," an online opportunity for patients to schedule appointments at urgent care centers, primary care doctors' offices or the emergency room.

"Our patients really appreciate just being able to walk in and be seen," said Catena.

Catena emphasized that Commonwealth Health views any expansion or addition to staff in terms of improving quality health care services available to their patients.

"We always want to be able to provide state-of-the-art services to our clients so they don't have to go out of the area," he said.

In Luzerne County, in addition to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, Commonwealth Health also operates First Hospital, a psychiatric facility, and Choices, a drug and alcohol facility, both in Kingston.



Submitted photo

The new, 34-bed, two-floor intensive care unit at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital includes state-of-the-art equipment and spacious rooms, ranging in size from 400 square feet to 600 square feet.



Times Leader photos

Chief Medical Officer for Geisinger Wyoming Valley Karlyn Paglia, administrative director Daniel Landesberg, associate physician for emergency medicine Todd Holmes and Dr. Anthony Aquilina pose for a portrait with a rendering of the new emergency facility at Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre.

Geisinger continues to grow

By Geri Gibbons
For Times Leader

WILKES-BARRE — Geisinger Health System will soon be providing yet another opportunity for area residents to have access to quality care close to home.

The healthcare system plans to reopen its emergency department in South Wilkes-Barre in July, which

Anthony Aquilina, the system's regional president, describes as a "small, full-service unit," which will provide ready access and services to those experiencing a medical emergency.

Unlike the healthcare system's larger facility in Plains Township, the smaller facility

will not be a trauma center.

Still, it will be a welcome addition to the south Wilkes-Barre site, previously Mercy Hospital, which has been a part of Geisinger since 2005.

"We are always investing in the community," said Aquilina. "We employ 2,500 people just in the Wilkes-Barre area."

Both adult and pediatric urgent care facilities will continue to operate at the South Wilkes-Barre site and an inpatient unit accommodating 45 to 50 beds will also be added.

"This will be for medical surgical patients and will have all private beds," he said. "More serious, critical patients will be transferred to our larger hospital."

Aquilina emphasized that although the re-opening of the emergency department in South Wilkes-Barre is certainly an exciting development in Geisinger Wyoming



A rendering of Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre's new emergency facility.

Valley's history, the health care system is constantly moving forward in a variety of areas that range from innovations in health care to becoming more environmentally friendly.

Aquilina speaks passionately about the Frank and Dorteia Henry Cancer Center which brings the best physicians and surgeons to the Wyoming Valley to assist area resident battling cancer.

"Brain, abdominal, colon cancer," he said. "They require doctors with very specific specialties."

The healthcare system is also planning a blood cancer center within the next two years.

Other current and ongoing projects and happenings of the healthcare center include:

- An \$18 million central utility plant to make the hospital's facilities more energy efficient.
- A \$5.5 million radiology renovation project which will provide new, state-of-the-art imaging capabilities

in the Northeast and an updated 2,800-square-foot suite.

- A \$4.5 million True-Beam radiotherapy and radiosurgery treatment system at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Henry Cancer Center.
- A \$3.1 million endovascular operating room suite which will include an interventional neurovascular room with state-of-the-art hybrid technology

- A \$2.9 million, 3,900-square foot, 10-bed Observation Unit for specialized, streamlined patient care.
- A \$1.2 million MAKO robotic-assisted technology for knee and hip replacements at GSWB.
- Urgent Care opens in Geisinger Kistler Clinic.
- New GWV spiritual

center in the lobby to provide peaceful environment for patients and families.

- A new Memory and Cognition program (formerly Aging Brain Clinic), which includes a driving simulator, gait analyzer and family-oriented exam rooms.
- A Mamava nursing suite at GWV, which allows hospital visitors a private space to breast-feed.
- Geisinger was named official healthcare provider of the

RailRiders. Aquilina stressed the healthcare system's commitment to area residents, with consistent growth that provides state-of-the-art services.

"Here at Geisinger, we do things right," he said.

Reach the Times Leader newsroom at 570-829-7242 or on Twitter @TLnews.

“We are always investing in the community. We employ 2,500 people just in the Wilkes-Barre area.”
Dr. Anthony Aquilina
Geisinger's regional president

Owner: NEPA perfect place to grow his business



Nick Duvall, owner of Duvall Leatherwork in Kingston, stands for a picture in his leather shop.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Duvall Leatherwork right at home

By Brigid Edmunds bedmunds@timesleader.com

KINGSTON — In 13 years, Nick Duvall went from selling leather goods out of his home to a brick-and-mortar storefront on Wyoming Avenue.

Duvall, owner of Duvall Leatherwork, got started in leather work through sad-



Leather wallets on display at Duvall Leatherwork in Kingston.

dle repair. He apprenticed in the saddle world, which deepened his knowledge of the craft.

“I learned technique and leather from that world,” he said.

However, Duvall’s relationship with leather developed during his childhood.

He said he had always worked with leather as a kid.

“It was like my hobby,” he said. “So I’m partially apprenticed trained and partially self-taught.”

Duvall, who is originally from southern Pennsylvania, moved to the area and after working a job he wasn’t thrilled with, decided to start the business.

“I did the leather work as a side job, and I really liked it, and when I was 25 years old, I started my business,” he said.

“And I never looked back one time.”

In 2005, Duvall Leatherwork was born out of Duvall’s home. At the beginning of the business, he said he worked mainly doing historical reproductions.

“We focused on civil-war era leather gear,” he said. “With that said, quite a bit of our work at that time was for the military and National Parks Service.”

Within a year, Duvall found the Wyoming Avenue storefront, and the bricks-and-mortar shop opened in 2006.

Duvall said he wouldn’t have considered a different market to start his business in, citing the cost of production, workforce and market size.

“This is a great place to conduct business,” he said. “It’s fairly inexpensive to operate, there’s a large enough workforce that’s eager to work and do a skilled job.”

“I wouldn’t consider operating anywhere else,” he added.

Duvall said the company branched out into modern leather gear around 2012. He said they started out with a very niche product and market and have since expanded into crafting everyday items.

“That’s just been nothing but a boon since all that started,” he said.

His store is full of wallets, bags, belts, coasters, wine caddies and a plethora of other hand-made goods, with work stations set up in the back to manufacture the products sold.

Duvall said the business has multiple avenues of sale: online, in-store, at art festivals, through contract work and business-to-business sales.

“We have a full e-commerce website,” he said.

Customers can purchase all the products Duvall has to offer through the website.

One of his biggest forms of sales is the art festivals, Duvall said.

“We do about 15 to 20 shows a year between May and early November,” he said.

“That’s a huge market for us.”

Duvall said this year, they have shows set up from Rochester, N.Y., down to Washington, D.C.

He said going out to shows is a great way for him to meet customers.

“The shows are a really great time for me to advertise,” he said.

He also has business clients across the country. They do business-to-business transactions, such as making leather pads for salons, as well as contract

work such as manufacturing wallets for businesses.

“It’s just a never-ending stream of things to do,” he said.

One of the most popular products they make are wallets, Duvall said.

“We make a tremendous amount of wallets,” he said.

The process begins with the leather, which Duvall said he purchases from all over the world. For his wallets, he said he mainly uses leather from England, but he also purchases leather from the United States, Mexico and South America, as well as other areas.

From there, a worker uses a machine called a clicker to cut out pieces of leather to make up the wallet.

“Cutting is a fairly skilled operation, too, because the person has to

know where on the hide to cut,” he said.

Once all the parts are cut out, they will go to another station with a sewing machine to assemble the wallets.

“Operators have to be able to stitch all the parts, and bring it together,” he said.

Then, the wallets are shipped to clients, taken to shows or put out in the store.

“We only sell the products we make,” Duvall said.

He added that the company is providing practical items for everyday life.

“We make consumer leather goods that people use and carry every single day,” he said.

Reach Brigid Edmunds at 570-991-6113 or on Twitter @brigidedmunds



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Employee Jonathan Williams, 37, of Olyphant, works to assemble belts at Duvall Leatherwork in Kingston.

Abby Singh expands Canteen's brand



Canteen 900 and Canteen Park owner Abby Singh and manager Michael Davies pose in Canteen Park in Kingston recently.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader

By Eileen Godin | egodin@timesleader.com

Eight years ago, Abby Singh opened Canteen 900 with the simple goal of having an income to put shoes on her son's feet.

Today, the Kingston native has six feet to put shoes on, plus a family of employees and customers reliant on the eatery at 900 Rutter Ave. in Forty Fort.

She also has a second restaurant, Canteen Park on Market Street in Kingston.

"When you work in the restaurant industry the people you work with become family," Singh said. "We really made our customers our family too."

Canteen 900 opened in October 2010. In late summer 2017, Singh and her husband, Bhanu Singh, opened Canteen Park. Canteen Park is in the former Cottman Transmission building at 181 N. Market St. in Kingston. It overlooks the pond at Kirby Park.

"We fell in love with the view of the park," Abby Singh said. "We wanted to be part of Market Street. It was blind stupidity that inspired us to take an old service station and turn it into something cool."

The couple found a lot of support for their business idea from their employees and customers.

"It took a lot of work ... a lot of cleaning," Singh said, noting the building smelled like grease and gas.

The Canteen family chipped in and incorporated Canteen 900's urban atmosphere to the new location, including a mural by local artist and employee Jake Snell.

"Jake did the murals at Canteen 900 too," Singh said. "Everything in (Canteen Park) is done by an employee."

For example, menu items for both restaurants are developed by Michael Davies, she said. Alex Major and Josh Snell created Canteen Park's logo, Alli Lacina



The outdoor dining area at Canteen Park in Kingston.

Sean McKeag | Times Leader

manages marketing, and Connor Duffy's green thumb is prevalent by all the plants and herbs throughout the eateries, Singh said.

Separate identities

Despite some similarities, Canteen Park does have a separate identity from Canteen 900.

Canteen Park has more of an adult vibe, featuring a selection of craft beers, as well as a variety of alcoholic beverages.

The new restaurant gave Singh and her crew an opportunity to create craft cocktails.

"We wanted to play with the natural juices made at (Canteen) 900," she said. "We make our own bitters – no artificial flavors goes into our drinks or foods."

The restaurant also features a unique beer tap made out of a large industrial looking pipe.

"There are only two of

these in America and one is right here," Singh said about the tap system.

Canteen Park opens at 4 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, which is when Canteen 900 closes. For a full list of hours and menus visit www.canteen900.com or www.canteen-park.com.

“

“When you work in the restaurant industry the people you work with become family. We really made our customers our family too.”

Abby Singh

”

"When one door locks the other opens," Singh said. "I am always planning two meals ahead. So when you are eating breakfast, I am already planning dinner."

Many of Canteen 900 employees also work at Canteen Park, so their brand of customized customer service continues.

"Our staff knows regular customers needs and preferences," Singh said, such as who has a dairy or gluten allergies.

Menu options also vary between the two eateries.

Both restaurants are

founded on a farm-to-table program, which provides fresh vegetables, herbs and meats provided by local farms.

Both Canteen Park and Canteen 900 offer a children's menu.

Also, Canteen Park also features a variety of nightly entertainment, including bands and

special events, such as a wine and cheese night set for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on May 3 and a tattoo contest on June 8, Lacina said.

Challenges

Managing two restaurants can pose a challenge, but Singh said the staff embraced

Canteen Park, and many employees work at both locations.

"There is a lot of communication during the day," she said. "Lots of texting."

The region's small business community is very supportive, Singh said. "Local restaurants really support each other."

One of the biggest hurdles the restaurants face are mechanical problems, Singh's husband, Bhanu, said.

But it seems not even mechanical problems can stop the Canteen family from moving forward.

Singh and her staff are working to develop a "small vegan menu for Canteen Park."

Singh is grateful for all the support from her employees, customers and community, which formed the perfect recipe for success.

"I wanted to give people a different option – to give people a feeling of visiting somewhere else," Singh said of her two restaurants. "There is something for everyone."

Reach Eileen Godin at 570-991-6387 or on Twitter @TLNews.



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Unusual path leads to right spot

By Dj Eberle
djeberle@timesleader.com

Brian Stanchak wasn't flying to Columbus for the Final Four.

No. Instead he was driving.

But before driving to Columbus, Ohio, Stanchak would make a pit-stop in Jersey City, N.J., to watch Marc Mitchell, one of his clients, be introduced as Saint Peters University's head women's basketball coach. Then he would drive back past Wilkes-Barre en route to the NCAA Division 1 Women's Basketball Championship semifinals in Ohio.

These are the types days that reinforces why Stanchak decided to open his sports agency, BDS Agency, in the first place.

"It's everything," Stanchak said. "My emotions are so up and down every day because if I have a client who wins a game then I'm ecstatic and if I have a client who loses a game than I'm depressed. For me, it's like my emotions are all over the place because of that. Seeing them reach their goal is unbelievable."

"I'm driving two and a half hours in the opposite direction just to go to (Mitchell's) press conference just to drive up back past Wilkes-Barre to go to Columbus because I want to be there for his special day. I know how hard he worked to get to this



Brian Stanchak started his career as a women's college basketball coach but now is a sports agent, working out of a Wilkes-Barre office building.

point. That never gets old when I get a phone call that 'I got the job.'"

But Stanchak, 37, didn't always want to be a sports agent.

As a sports management major at Seton Hall University, Stanchak noticed that he was one of the only students in his class that didn't want to become a sports agent after school. He was working with the women's basketball team at the time as a student assistant and video coordinator.

Stanchak saw a future in women's basketball and that's what he pursued. He made three more stops up the collegiate ranks from the time he graduated from Seton Hall in 2004 until he took his post as director of athletics and recreation at Penn State Wilkes-Barre in 2015.

After returning to his alma mater as an assistant women's basketball coach for three seasons, Stanchak would soon pursue a different calling.

In 2011, Stanchak would exchange his whistle and basketball for an office. He spent four years as the athletic director at PSU-Wilkes-Barre.

It was a change of pace and a different challenge in his life. It was one he enjoyed.

But then thanks to his new administration background, Stanchak started advising some of his friends in the coaching industry when it came time to negotiate contracts.

By the summer of 2013, Stanchak had decided to create his agency, The BDS Agency. He continued

to work at the university for two more years before he decided to become a sports agent full-time in February 2015.

"It's funny how things change. I never set out to be a sports agent," Stanchak said. "What ended up happening was I was advising a lot of my coaching friends that I stayed in touch with when I was an AD on contract negotiations, handling situations with their administrators, interview preparation. As these coaches were having some success then it kind of culminated in me just realizing I could provide a really unique and intricate value to coaches based on my experience on both sides. That's when I decided to start my agency."

Thanks to a deep

background in women's college basketball, Stanchak was able to build a client list rather quickly.

When five of his initial clients earned their first Division 1 head coaching positions in the following off-season, which runs from March to July, Stanchak got the vindication he needed to support his leap of faith into a new career path.

"I kind of saw that, 'Hey, I've built a little bit of a foundation and there's a ton of potential here,'" Stanchak said. "Like I say to my clients with their contracts and stuff, I would have regretted not going all in on it to see what could happen."

Since his agency's incarnation in 2013, Stanchak has mostly focused on women's basketball clientele. While he does represent a few men's basketball coaches, Stanchak puts the majority of his focus toward the women's game.

And as his business has grown, his clients have started to notice.

"To me that niche, and one, I've built a really good reputation and have had proven success and, two, I'm not an agent who went to law school and decided, 'Hey, I can make money representing coaches without understanding the industry,'" Stanchak said. "I think having been a coach on that side and having been

on the other side of the table as an athletic director, I'm very different in terms with my approach, how I work with clients, in terms of my communication with athletic administrators. I think I make them feel more comfortable than someone who might have learned how to talk to someone watching 'Jerry Maguire' or something."

It's not often a sports management major who decides to go into coaching and then administration only to settle in as a sports agent.

But it's that unique path that took Stanchak to where he is today. And he wouldn't change anything.

"I look back and when I wanted to coach I wanted to coach," Stanchak said. "There were things I loved about coaching and things I got frustrated with, so I thought administration would be a good path. Then there were things I loved about being an AD and things I got frustrated with. Now being in this position, I wouldn't change anything and I think that it just shows me that both of those paths led me to where I am and I love what I do and I would not want to do anything else. I'm blessed every day to work with outstanding coaches and people."

Reach DJ Eberle at 570-991-6398 or on Twitter @ByDJEberle

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Aimee Dilger | Times Leader
Eileen Song of Edward Jones in her office on Public Square.

Eileen Song committed to profession, community

By Ed Lewis
elewis@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — Eileen Song worked in the big cities of New York and Boston and spent 11 years in the seasonal tourist coastal city of Myrtle Beach, S.C.

But her “Yankee” roots called her back north.

A financial advisor for Edward Jones since 2002, Song wanted to return to Pennsylvania. When she inquired about a transfer, she was told about the Edward Jones office on Public Square in Wilkes-Barre.

Having never before been in Wilkes-Barre, she sought advice from a friend who went to King’s College and another who resides in Sugarloaf.

They both told her about the crime rate. Still, Song wasn’t discouraged and set up a visit. She never looked back.

“My first time in Wilkes-Barre was driving down Hazle Street,” Song explained. “It looked like the area where I grew up in Berks County. I never lost my Yankee energy and wanted to come back to Pennsylvania. When I reached Public Square, I remember seeing a woman wrapped in a blanket hustling across the street. This was Jan. 12, 2012, freezing cold. I knew I wanted to come.”

Song, a 1988 graduate of Pennsylvania State University, said she immediately fell for Wilkes-Barre arriving at a time when the downtown area was being rejuvenated with new sidewalks around Public Square and businesses were being opened.

“I really became attracted to Wilkes-Barre and the cultural diversity,” Song said. “I arrived at a really great time, and I saw the potential. It was freezing my first day here. I took a walk to the riverfront, and I could see the possibilities.”

It didn’t take Song very long to get involved in the community. She reached out to corporate and civic leaders, being named in September 2014 to the King’s College President’s Council and served on the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority from June 2015 to December 2016. She is also the incoming president of the board of directors at the Osterhout Free Library, having served as first vice president on the library’s board.

In addition, she is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association, and recently completed a three-year term as a deacon at First Presbyterian Church where she is a member.

“People here are very nice,” Song said. “Everyday I look out our office window and see people moving about. It seems every year it gets better and better, and there are many activities and events going on.”

Those activities are the annual Farmers Marker, Fine Arts Fiesta and the Cherry Blossom Festival. She also pointed to effects to revitalize the historic Irem Temple Building on North Franklin Street in Wilkes-Barre.

“When you have an idea, you have to feed that idea, incubate that idea and talk about it to make progress,” Song said.

Edward Jones, a Fortune 500 company, provides financial services for individual investors in the United States and Canada. Song said Edward Jones is committed to being involved in communities they serve and is a corporate sponsor of the Alzheimer’s Association.

“There are 11,000 offices of Edward Jones in the county and service to the community is extremely important for the firm,” Song said.

Edward Jones has had an office on Public Square for 12 years, Song said, noting she believe it is the best location on the square next to West Market Street. She said Edward Jones is planning to open offices in Pittston and Mountain Top.

Reach the Times Leader newsroom at 570-829-7242.

Sacking the competition

American Paper Bag revolutionizes an old industry



Sean McKeag | Times Leader
Plant manager Cipriano Hinojosa and CEO Ian Robson could have opened their company, American Paper Bag, anywhere in the country. They choose Northeastern Pennsylvania.

By Mark Guydish | mguydish@timesleader.com

SUGAR NOTCH — You may ask, how do you reinvent the paper bag? For Ian Robson and Cipriano Hinojosa at American Paper Bag, the question is: Why didn’t anyone figure it out ages ago.

“It just never clicked,” company CEO Robson said. “We’re a very traditional business. Paper bags have been made the same way since the 1860s.”

You know the drill. You see it anytime you buy groceries and answer “paper or plastic” with the former: Rectangular, bottom folded and glued, top lacking handles or pretty much anything except an opening. A bad grip, unbalanced packing or bit of rain can make the thing crack open like a pummeled pinata.

It’s pretty much the same since Francis Wolfe invented a machine in 1852 to make them and Margaret Knight invented a device 17 years later to cut, fold and paste the bottoms. How did American Paper Bag manage to reinvent something so plain brown simple?

“We redesigned the paper bag,” Robson said. “It’s greener, it runs much faster through the machines, it uses less raw material, it takes less pallet space.”

He’s not about to reveal trade secrets, but he does show the state of the art machines about to be installed that, once up and running, can make three bags a second. They can also be reset to make different size and types of bags in as little as 30 minutes, compared with up to 8-hours to switch job types in a regular paper bag factory. “We think we’ll be able to get it down to 20 minutes” once workers are familiar with the system, Robson added.

The big trick is strikingly simple. While traditional paper bags and these new ones are made from a single sheet of paper, the old bags had those elaborate folds making the bottom. “There’s a lot of origami going on down there,” he quipped.

The new system essentially takes one long strip of paper and folds it in half, creasing the bottom and gluing the two sides together. The bag is more circular or ovate, but otherwise works as well as or better than the old style ones.

The advantages?

A traditional bag folds each side inward, immediately meaning a folding bag has four layers of paper when flat. The bottom has considerably more, and is folded over those four layers. “You can have up to 15 layers in this,” he says, holding a traditional bag.



Shown are examples of paper bags that the American Paper Bag in Sugar Notch can make. The company uses a process different from the way bags have been made since 1860s.

The new bags are two layers everywhere except the bottom, folding in one place for a total of four layers. A retailer who uses millions of bags orders them by the pallet, and a truckload of those pallets being shipped to an outlet would hold about 90,000 bags, Robson said. Fill the same truck with American Paper Bags, and you get 300,000.

But that’s just the start. The design allows the company to change size and shape of the bag with ease via computerized controls on the machine. The design also means they can add folds — crease the lip of the bag over to increase strength, say — as part of that 3-bags-a-second process. “To fold over the edges in regular bags, they have to do it by hand.”

The bags can be made of different papers for different uses. They can have handles cut into them or added. They can have “glue lines” placed almost anywhere inside, allowing them to be compartmentalized (he showed one formed into two halves, just right for wine bottles), or to be made into mailing containers that

can have a single glue line allowing a person to mail a package back after opening it.

American Bag will be able to print almost anything you want on as much of the bag as you want, can perforate the bag to make it easier to open from the top or sides, and can put vent holes in it, making it more suitable for shipping food, which Robson noted is a very fast-growing business. Plastic bags, by comparison, can actually steam hot food and make it soggy in transit.

“Phase 1” of the business plan should be done in the next few months so the company can hire people and start making bags in the 42,000 square feet of space being rented. There is already enough demand to “start making them right now,” Robson said. He expects to hire about 10 people initially.

“Phase 2” calls for expansion that would double the space and add another 25 or so employees, and the demand is already running so high “we may have to move that up.” It could be implemented less than three years from initial production.

Why set up here? Robson is quick to praise the state for offering incentives, but showered extra praise on the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, noting the people there “made

it one-stop shopping” in getting help and advice. He and Hinojosa, the plant manager, looked throughout North America for a corporate headquarters location, including California and Toronto, as well as Lehigh Valley and Scranton in Pennsylvania.

The building on Hanover Street in Sugar Notch provided the best of all choices, giving access to major markets, with lots of transportation options and without roads crowded with commuters, he said.

Besides, the Great Britain native added, “I love it here.”

That’s why you can expect to see millions of bags rolling out the doors in coming months. It’s also why, if Robson finds a good enough reason to do it, you may see little Sugar Notch in the Guinness Book of World records some day. One advantage to the bag manufacturing method is that the length of bag is only limited by the amount of paper in those giant rolls.

“We could make a mile-long bag,” he said. “That would be the longest machine-made paper bag on record.”

And that could hold a lot of wine bottles for celebrating.

Reach Mark Guydish at 570-991-6112 or on Twitter @TLMarkGuydish

Market Street Business Center has plenty to offer

By Joe Soprano
jsoprano@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — Tucked into the strip mall in the soon-to-be renovated Market Street train station complex is a company that offers a host of services to businesses and retail consumers.

In the same complex with a nail salon and a Domino's Pizza sits The Market Street Business Center.

The center itself holds three separate business — Business Office Systems Inc., Gold Star Digital Document Services and JTB Billy Boxes.

Developer George Albert has big plans from the complex that hosts the businesses, and owner Jeff Thomas is excited about that.

"We really feel like when the station gets developed and all that gets done, we can be in a good position to continue our business-to-business relationships with customers and expand by getting more of that business," Thomas said. "In my mind, I kind of wanted to be a part of this."

"I've known George Albert for many years, and I think he is on the right track with this particular section."

Thomas is already impressed with the changes to the complex in the last year, which includes new sidewalks and lighting.

"We can see a big difference, especially with the night lighting," he said. "This facility is much more welcoming



The Market Street Business Center owner Jeff Thomas prints off graphic color print on a wide format printer.

and a friendly, safe place at night."

Thomas first got into the business in 1989 with Four Star Business Systems, which he called "kind of the parent company of everything."

"We sold and serviced Xerox equipment for many years," Thomas said. "We got into a Xerox agency program. We covered 17 counties in Northeastern and Central Pennsylvania and 12 counties in New York."

Eventually, Xerox canceled the program.

Thomas opened Gold Star Wide Format in 2001 and acquired Business Office Systems in 2006 and later added JT Billyboxes.

"This Market Street Business Center is basically a conglomeration of three businesses," he said. "Our thought was

that we have been in this building for eight years, and it was our understanding that the building is going to become more retail friendly once all the work is done here. And we believe that to be true.

"So what wanted to do is take our business model and make it not just a business-to-business business model and to give it a retail twang to it."

Thomas believes both retail and business customers will notice what sets his businesses apart from others.

"Two things — the scope of our product offering and the depth of our skill set," Thomas said when asked what people should know about the business center.

"We have really smart

people working here," he continued. "Anyone can install a machine and some print drivers, but when you talk about putting together a software package to actually optimize somebody's workflow ... to make their day more productive, to make them a better more efficient, whatever they are ...

"We are the people that can help them for that."

Thomas said that if a customer wants to buy a copier, he is more than glad to sell it to them. But that's not his primary objective.

"I don't want to sell any copiers in Wallenpack," he said. "We want to be in position where we can provide our existing customers who we have more complicated relationships with more products and services."

Gold Star's core business is engineers, architects, contractors and attorneys.

"We do a lot of construction drawings for major construction companies," he said.

Thomas was also proud of the work his team does for lawyers. He said in addition to copying and enlargement services, Gold Star can help lawyers present cases, aiding attorneys in developing those cases and running the technology in the courtroom.

He added that the company had recently completed its first case in federal court.

"The lady that runs the court said it's the best she has ever seen a trial tech team perform in 10 years, so we were excited about that," he said of

See CENTER | 11



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Meshing technology and employees

Axelrad's business model fits mission to a T-shirt



Dave Maloney, co-owner of Axelrad Screen Printing, puts his industrial organizational psychology expertise to work keeping all the moving parts in sync at the Wilkes-Barre company.

Aimee Dilger photos | Times Leader

By Jerry Lynott | jlynott@timesleader.com

WILKES-BARRE — The silence on the other end of the phone was brief, Dave Maloney recalled of what was supposed to be a routine update on an order.

The Philadelphia 76ers ordered 18,000 shirts for a white-out promotion for one of their home basketball games and contracted Axelrad Screen Printing for the job, said Maloney, co-owner of the Wilkes-Barre company.

“The day before they were due they called to check on them, just like, ‘We’re making sure we’re on track to get our delivery tomorrow.’ I was like, ‘Yeah, no problem.’ The lady just stopped. Somebody else got on the phone like, ‘You’re seriously, you’re done?’” Maloney said.

Axelrad’s kept promise not only earned the respect of the client, but also led to new business as word spread about the company.

“Our product’s done when we say it’s going to be done,” Malone said.

“And every time we like obtain a new large customer, it’s because the last guy couldn’t keep up with the demand.”

It’s easier said than done, assured Maloney, but Axelrad’s been able to deliver the goods on time by meshing technology with resources of skilled and committed humans.

“Everybody needs to be doing their job right for a shirt to come out the right way,” Maloney said.

The 38-year-old Maloney, of Shavertown, should know. He studied business industrial organizational psychology or as he put it, “how to run a business tightly,” and applies his expertise on the job.

“Yeah, there’s a lot of moving parts that need to fall in place,” Maloney said, starting with the arrival of blank shirts on the loading dock to when they’re



Matt Gobbler works on a new direct-to-screen image printer at Axelrad Screen Printing in Wilkes-Barre.

shipped out with designs applied by hand and machine.

The T-shirt printing hobby Maloney and Matt Triebel shared at Kutztown University blossomed into a full-blown enterprise with 22 employees and does more than \$2 million in net business from its crammed building on North Pennsylvania Avenue where it’s been for the past few years.

The building’s red and brown exterior sports the company’s name — a fictitious one, admitted Maloney — and the logo of a lightning bolt vertically emblazoned on a T-shirt from collar to waist. There’s no

indication from the outside of the activity inside on the two floors filled with equipment and supplies and bustling with workers.

“This is as automated as any screen printing goes,” Maloney said, showing of a machine resembling a spoked wheel with panels at the end. An employee fitted T-shirts over the flat panel surfaces in preparation for imprinting when water-based ink is applied to a screen pressed on top of the fabric. The shirts were removed by hand and placed on the rollers of an oven where they are cured.

Taking a short-sleeved black T-shirt produced for the band, Breaking Benjamin, Maloney pointed out the finish of the design.

“Did you ever feel like a T-shirt that has like ink on it? It makes it feel like a crust to it,” he said.

The Axelrad shirt was smooth and gets better with machine washings, Maloney said. “It takes the top layer off and it’s embedded in the shirt,” he said.

The company runs two manual and four automatic machines. “We roughly do about, I would say like between

6,000 and 10,000 shirts in a shift,” Maloney said.

The equipment, such as the new \$80,000 direct to screen image printer, is key to the production. “It’ll probably save us maybe \$12,000 a year in consumable costs” and pay for itself, Maloney said.

But the person operating the printer, the graphic designer, the sales person, the employee who counts and separates the shirts into sizes and the one who secures the hats in place for the embroidery machines are key too, he said.

The staff, with its do-what-needs-to-be-done attitude, distinguishes the company from others, Maloney said.

“Our staff is based on like the DIY (Do It Yourself) mentality,” he said. “Everyone is cross trained. Everybody is trained in multiple areas.”

The company runs one and a half shifts and promises a seven-day turnaround on orders from 25 to 10,000 pieces. Its customers are mainly in the East and Midwest and located within the two-day ground delivery area for UPS, Maloney said.

Axelrad’s location suits it fine. The company will stay put and grow. “We just plan on expanding it to a 24-hour operation instead of moving,” Maloney said.

“It’s easy to sell, hard to produce,” Maloney said.

Reach Jerry Lynott at 570-991-6120 or on Twitter @TLJerryLynott.

Todd Sabecky removes a t-shirt from the silk screen machine at Axelrad Screen Printing in Wilkes-Barre.



DJ Tasselmyer works in the embroidery department in Axelrad Screen Printing in Wilkes-Barre.





Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Christian Wielage is one of several people behind the effort to save the Irem Temple on North Franklin street in Wilkes-Barre.

Life's passions drive Wielage to save Irem Temple

By Roger DuPuis

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Christian Wielage has always been a man with a vision.

When he was a young man, the Wyoming Seminary graduate and Back Mountain resident set out to make a name for himself in the world of finance.

Just not here.

"I had just been conditioned to believe that there was no opportunity here," said Wielage, who earned his undergraduate degree in Lancaster and an MBA in finance and economics in Pittsburgh, with a stop in Baltimore before he found himself working for IBM in New York.

"I was a worldwide planning analyst for their global technology services group, supporting the CFO of a \$36B business,"

Wielage said in a recent interview.

That was the better part of a decade ago. The chance to help his father and a business partner expand their business budgeting and planning software company, PlanGuru, was one of the things that drew Wielage home toward Luzerne County, where he and his wife both have roots and relatives.

Today, Wielage lives in the Wyoming Valley once again, is the driving force behind two small businesses with downtown Wilkes-Barre offices, and is a key member of a group gearing up to restore one of the region's most distinctive landmarks for a new lease on life.

"I concluded that I could unequivocally find the talent I need here," he said, adding that favorable incentive programs offered by Pennsylvania, together with lower costs and better purchasing power for employees, make the region a bargain for entrepreneurs.

Wielage, 38, also is part of the Irem Temple Restoration Project, which also includes local businessmen and public officials such as Joe Nardone Jr., Alex Flack, Charles Barber, Larry Newman and Tony Brooks.

His involvement in the plan to revive the 110-year-old edifice owes much to two passions: Genealogy and guitar music.

Wielage counts among his ancestors some of the most distinguished names in Luzerne County history: Slocum, Harvey and Hollenback.

He didn't always know the significance of those names, until he started delving deeply into his family's history about five years ago. Nor did he fully appreciate the Irem Temple's story.

Construction on the building began in 1907, and it was

dedicated in December 1908. The North Franklin Street structure was built to host the rituals, social events and entertainment of the Wilkes-Barre Shriners, a Masonic organization.

"Realizing my maternal grandfathers were shriners and masons, I started to think, 'What is that building I've been driving past when I go into Wilkes-Barre? What do they do there? What's inside of it?'"

The popular and powerful fraternal organizations once boasted such magnificent "temples" in cities across America. Many declined as other venues — and forms of entertainment — chipped away at the market for live acts in small-

and medium-sized cities.

Wilkes-Barre still had its grand F.M. Kirby Center on Public Square to host theater, music and comedy, but the Irem Temple faded from

prominence. It seemed two big venues downtown was one too many. The temple fell into dormancy and disrepair, and has been vacant at least since the early 2000s.

Wielage and his group want to change that. And he says they have a plan to do so that wouldn't infringe on the Kirby's success.

They envision the main auditorium transformed into a wide-open, flat, seatless space for such diverse events as guitar concerts, weddings, flea markets, even wrestling.

But it's the music Wielage is passionate about.

"I'm a guitar guy. I listen to a lot of heavy metal bands, I listen to a lot of jam bands, because they have good guitar players," he said. "I would end up going to a lot of concerts in old theaters ... where it was once a seated theater, but since there's no room for three seated theaters in a lot of towns anymore, they took out the seats and created a big giant flat-floored hall."

"So those types of performers that don't play the Kirby and the Kirby doesn't want would go" to the Irem, he continued.

"The Kirby's an amazing institution in this town, and a lot of people are afraid that this project would cannibalize the Kirby. I would argue that it would be synergistic," Wielage said. "There's very few events that would com-

pete. It's a primary decision — you want seats or you don't want seats kind of thing. They would cater to completely different types of events."

After years of planning and low-level fundraising, 2018 could see some serious action toward the group's goals, Wielage said.

The group hopes to finalize negotiations with chamber officials over the next month or so to initiate the transfer of the building. Soon after, they hope to roll out their first serious capital campaign.

Their goals are big: About \$10 million to \$15 million to reach full occupancy, ideally by the end of 2022. Wielage outlined a tentative timeline for three phases to reach that target:

- Phase I — stabilization by the end of 2019, which will cost a little more than \$2 million.

"We hope to start doing some of the most immediate repairs later this year and have the real bulk of Phase I begin next year," he said. "We hope that we can really take care of some of the most immediate things that are causing deterioration to the building. We hope to remedy those things before the building has to go through another winter."

- Phase II — Partial occupancy. That includes being able to use the main auditorium, and ramped-up fundraising, by the end of 2020.

- Phase III — Full occupancy, but in a "shabby chic" mode, by the end of 2022.

"And then the building reaches a phase of what we just call continuous restoration," Wielage said.

A man and his plans

It's perhaps not fair to ask Wielage what his "day job" is, as he sort of has several.

He is the CEO of PlanGuru, whose main office is in the Luzerne Bank Building on Public Square.

"We help small businesses do budgeting and forecasting. Help them make better decisions," he said. "In the sub-\$10 million space, we're really trying to get these businesses to embrace these practices."

The business was founded by his father, Edward Wielage, together with Sally Sprankle. After Wielage joined he brought on a marketing director, Tripp Graham, a fellow Sem grad from the Dallas area.

Across the hall, Wielage has another business brewing: Harvey Guitars, which is gearing up to produce high-quality boutique guitars.

As if that were not enough, he

Dialing up a new type of business

By Derek Levarse

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binaryPBX

Providing internet-based phone systems for businesses.

Address: 210 Division St., Kingston

Phone: 1-888-338-4212, ext. 3101

Website: binaryPBX.com

The trick, Caleb Steinbacher said, is just getting people to know his business exists.

No, not just the company that he founded — binaryPBX in Kingston — but the actual service he provides.

That would be Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone systems. And yes, he realizes that the mention of it causes some people's eyes to glaze over.

So what does work? Telling them how much their business may be able to save over time with a customized, internet-based system as opposed to one that requires a separate phone line for every employee.

"Any time I can get someone to listen to me and understand what we do, I haven't had an issue with them purchasing," said Steinbacher, the company's CEO. "Just to get them to understand I'm trying to save them money, keep a bigger percentage, that's the hardest part of it."

Part of it is the terminology, which can be unfamiliar. PBX, for example, stands for Private Branch Exchange, which is a phone network that allows a company to communicate through an internal system as well as externally with the world.

Another part is that the technology is just starting to grow in Northeastern Pennsylvania. One of the reasons that Steinbacher moved to the area in 2016 and ultimately got binaryPBX fully up and running last October was that he felt the region was being underserved with regards to phone systems.

"There was an opportunity to be had, especially on the technological side, of being here," Steinbacher said.

It helped prompt him to become his own boss and make it his full-time job.

Steinbacher had previously worked as a rental car representative while also working for five years in telephony.

"I became a contractor with a bigger company (Crosstalk Solutions) that does the same thing," Steinbacher said. "I realized that NEPA really needed something like this. So I decided to branch off on my own. I'm still with that company — the management there encourages that."

He has since opened up an office on Division Street in Kingston.

By starting up his own shop, Steinbacher aims to deliver a personal touch to his customers, first by helping them tailor their

system to their own company and then by being available to provide service directly when needed.

But the key for the start-up is still getting a foot in the door with potential customers.

One tactic is a free service offered on his website, binaryPBX.com, which allows businesses to submit their phone bills for analysis to see if a VoIP system can reduce costs.

"People are blown away when they see the difference in price," Steinbacher said. "I have some who still call me and thank me months later."

An example he cited in an [article he published on LinkedIn](#) was how one of his customers — a South Carolina car dealership with two locations and 12 employees — spent \$4,330 to install a VoIP system. That decreased its monthly bill from an average of \$569.17 per month to \$46.85 per month, creating a return on the initial investment in eight months.

While able to work with customers all over, Steinbacher said he would like to stay local with his customer base, and that the area has helped him get the business off the ground.

"There's a lot of very nice people around here," said Steinbacher, who has been in touch with other local entrepreneurs such as Jason Percival at NEPA Geeks computer repair and Chris Hacken at Loop Internet, both of whose businesses are based in Wilkes-Barre. "They've been a really useful resource."

In time, and with further local growth, Steinbacher hopes to be able to expand from his current staff of three part-time employees, adding another full-time worker by the end of the year.

"Of course, it's mostly trying to get your name known and let people know the service exists," Steinbacher said. "When you're competing against Verizon and Comcast and those types, you have to get people to call you instead of them."

"... If you're calling Verizon any time because your phone's down, you might not always get someone. Any customers have my direct number to get things up and working."



The Irem Temple on North Franklin street in Wilkes-Barre was built in 1907.

“The Wyoming Valley was the heart of the revolutions: We had an instrumental role in the American Revolution and an instrumental role in the Industrial Revolution. We have an inspirational 300-year history here.”

Christian Wielage



Submitted photo

Caleb Steinbacher, the founder and CEO of binaryPBX in Kingston, said other small business owners in Northeastern Pennsylvania have aided him as he gets his own company off the ground.

Think Center is the pre-school of entrepreneurship

By Mark Guydish
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WILKES-BARRE — There are surely still a few who remember in musty corners of the mind when retail giant Woolworth's store helped anchor Wilkes-Barre's booming downtown, one of the original "five-and-dime" store chains just off Public Square, a chain successful thanks to cutting edge merchandising of items bought with loose change.

Alas, it became a symbol of obsolescence long before Amazon.com became the online monster eating retail. The corporation announced the Wilkes-Barre location's closing in 1993, part of a restructuring that shut half its stores. By 1997, the chain was, for all practical purposes, out of business.

The "Woolworth building" stood for years as stark testimony to Wilkes-Barre's failure to adapt to the death of a powerful economic past. Which may make it particularly fitting that now, remodeled and reborn, it serves as a modern beacon of a potentially potent business future.

Most people don't know it as anything but the joint book store venture launched in the first floor by Wilkes University.

"It is a business incubator in true fashion," explained Joe Boylan, a consultant who previously worked with one of the center's original champions, the Wilkes Barre Chamber of Commerce, and now serves as consultant helping shepherd newer services of the center into reality.

"It was always built to have a mix-use retailer on the first floor, a true incubator on the second floor where companies could grow, and a third floor or one of those businesses to take over, as Pepperjam did. We opened in 2004-05."

At that point the center was more ambition than fruition, a lot of glitzy renovated space awaiting a purposes.

No more. The book store has become a downtown staple, including a Starbucks outlet. Pepperjam, founded by brothers Kris and Rick Jones as an online gourmet food seller shifted to making business support programs, grew to

several locations while keeping headquarters in Wilkes-Barre and being sold in 2009, eventually becoming part of eBay Enterprises before being re-branded as Pepperjam. The founders went on to launch other enterprises.

Another recent graduate from the center, Bezick noted, is American Paper Bag, which expects to start making unique, eco-friendly bags soon in its new Sugar Notch factory.

"Ian (Robson, company CEO) was one of our original co-workers," Bezick said with a bit of boast.

And that second floor? It has become a maze of office space and conference rooms housing other companies that have moved from inspiration to incubation, some clearly poised to boom. Take Mobiniti, a rapidly growing Short Message Service.

"We do text message marketing," Carmine Falletta, vice president of sales, explained during a short break from his work. "Businesses can use our platform to send out images, coupons, alerts, what ever they would like to send to customers."

Started five years ago by a number of people you could count on one hand, Mobiniti now as 30 employees and expects "to add two to three per month for the next year," Falletta said. To punctuate the growth, he noted the business cards on his desk are "old." They bill him as an account executive. But then, it's a digital enterprise, not a paper one.

Founded by Bryan Hunsinger and Rocco Ciavarella, the company offers a "user-managed platform" customers log in to and use to type in messages and send them out to subscribers. The client companies get subscribers through any of the multiple variations in the smart phone app world, through keywords, "short codes," contests and other lures to a website.

Falletta notes the company can continue to grow for some time in the Innovation Center by simply renting some more of the flexible space, until it becomes big enough to look for other quarters, though

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Sean McKeag | Times Leader

Rodney Ridley talks about the entrepreneur program at Wilkes University and his experience being the executive director for the Allan P. Kirby Enterprise Center.

Enterprise Center moves ideas to market

By Mark Guydish
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WILKES-BARRE — The desk sits somewhere beneath a clutter of ideas and examples of future now: tiny metal parts with teeth and screw threads only visible with a magnifying glass, a small gizmo of 12 pairs of plastic cogs all that all mesh together and spin when one is turned, palm-size round containers to hold "CBD-infused ice", and a stack of those mini-bats available as pro baseball souvenirs.

"It's a 'student attitude adjustment apparatus'," Rodney Ridley smiles as he lifts one bat to show off a label that reads exactly that. Of course, the executive director of Wilkes University's Allan P. Kirby Center of Free Enterprise and Entrepreneurship doesn't physically adjust anything, he just uses the bats as prop when needed.

He offers one case study, pointing (with a bat) to the box of "infused ice" containers.

"This was the idea of a student who refused to tell me about it in class when we asked him to work on a business plan," Ridley says. "He came up with some internet-based thing. He was hiding this from me. I let him know there is a way for me to get you to adjust your attitude."

"This" was the student's notion that cannabidiol — CBD, a non-psychoactive component in marijuana — could be administered medicinally to children battling cancer by infusing it into a treat like Italian ice. Evidence suggested many medical benefits, but the CBD came in a "shoe polish" form that children obviously found utterly unpalatable.

"His father owns Josie Italian Ice in Kingston," Ridley continued explaining. One day the student suggested, half-jokingly, that it could be successful if put in Italian ice. The idea stuck, the father helped figure out how to do it, and

soon children with cancer may benefit from a medicine disguised as literally cool snack.

It's exactly what the Enterprise Center works toward: Coaxing ideas out of local innovators and connecting them with mentors and opportunities to help those ideas transform into businesses.

There are "RAE sleeves," a fashion accessory devised by a "young lady" for those who may need to convert a sleeveless dress at a stylish party because of a chill in the room. Or the "guy who built an analytic engine, making an app that 'basically is pulling data from local police and other sources to tell you how safe you are, is this a nice neighborhood?'"

"We pay attention to the epiphany state of the entrepreneuring process," Ridley stresses, "that stage where you woke up, got in the shower and figured out how to build the next new camera. We help answer: How do you get to building it?"

The fundamental goal: "You can fail, but you should fail correctly," he explains. "Nobody — especially early-stage entrepreneurs — should fail for non-market reasons."

"If the market doesn't like your candy or your camera or whatever, there's nothing we can do about it. But you shouldn't fail because you spent most of your capital getting a patent on something that already has a patent, or on buying a building when you should have leased."

The center helps by connecting the person with ideas with the people with experience. It has office space for a business incubators, but "we are a feeding system, I like to say, for other incubators as well." It has scores of area businesses and organizations lined up to offer advice and mentoring. It can help connect the entrepreneur with potential investors.

Connections can stretch beyond the area and even overseas. Ridley points to "Xenoil," a com-

pany founded by Wilkes students Rachel Hodgins and Anthony Prato, who first looked to extract oil from the endless number of plastic bags used in America. That proved too costly, Ridley said, but they did devise Xenowax, which can be used to make engineering prototypes and other commercial enterprises. In February, the two moved into the CAN BE incubator in West Hazleton to start producing the product.

But that's not the end of story. Ridley recounts how "We had a guy from Tanzania" visit to study the entrepreneur program. Turns out that country has a plastic bag problem, and he is looking to help bring the technology back to his homeland.

And that's not the end of the story, either. In Tanzania, a cottage industry has sprung up making elegant greeting cards out of banana plant leaves, and they are looking to market the unique cards in the U.S. The center is trying to help make that happen as well, Ridley says.

The center embraces disruptive forces. Those tiny metal parts and plastic cogs were made with a 3-D printer. "They can print candy, and body parts," he grinned.

All pretty impressive, but his pride joy is the "Kirby Scholars" program.

"I had the epiphany or saying 'let's find the top student in every discipline required to make a product come to life,'" he explains. That means the best marketing student, best engineering majors, the best in every discipline. Scholars provide their expertise and service to other students and entrepreneurs in the incubator. In exchange, they get experience in their field and make contact with some of the top area people working in their future profession.

Ridley beams when he talks about the success of the program, seeing nothing but a bright future of regional innovation.

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Alexa Webby, an intern and Penn State student, uses the Think Center.

Aimee Dilger | Times Leader

Invent Penn State re-invents region

By Mark Guydish

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WILKES-BARRE — About a week before Christmas in 2015, Penn State University President Eric Barron stood in an old store basement with a stripped concrete floor, a mass of fresh drywall still showing the spackling over seams and screws, and saw something completely different.

“Given the turnout, and what this space is going to look like,” he said, “I expect we’ll be extraordinarily successful.”

“This space” was a big chunk of unfinished basement in the former Woolworth’s store. In prior years the building had become the “Innovation Center,” a college book store at ground level and a business incubator above. While the book store included a basement level, much of the space languished.

Enter INVENT Penn State, a new grant program Barron had introduced that January to encourage collaboration between neighboring business and the students and faculty at the university’s many outlying campuses.

The Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce jointly applied for a grant with the Penn State Wilkes-Barre campus which — while now located in Lehman Township — has deep Wilkes-Barre roots. Together, they won \$50,000, a sum added to \$250,000 awarded through the state’s community development grants given out each year from the money garnered through legalized gambling.

The space may have looked a bit bare and industrial when Barron joined others to announce the creation of what was originally dubbed “Innovation Squared,” but it went into limited use, mostly by the Chamber, pretty quickly while finishing touches were added.

Now the basement boasts a wood-like floor finish, a large multi-media meeting center, offices, a small conference room and plenty of space. Re-dubbed “The Think Center,” it has a relatively new director, Ahmad Ali,



John Rodriguez and John Daskalis speak with Catherine Ries and Amber Sweeney at the Invent Penn State room in the Think Center in downtown Wilkes-Barre.

which means it can be available five days a week.

“One of the things we wanted this year was to have a staff so it can be open for entrepreneurs to work out of,” Lindsay Bezick said with the enthusiasm one expects from the vice president of the Wilkes-Barre Chamber. Ali worked with Jessica Ismail to finish the decor.

At its most basic, the Think Center is just that, a place would-be entrepreneurs can use with resources they can share as they work to bring an idea to market. For \$50 a month, anyone can gain access. Local college students can use it for free.

“It’s like a modern day garage,” consultant Joe Boylan said. “Instead of working out of Starbucks, you can utilize this space.

But there’s a lot more to it. Perhaps most importantly, it is now the home of Wilkes-Barre Connect, a service designed to get those who want to do with those who can help get it done.

Boylan rattled off the five aspects of WB Connect: A regional intern program, a series of videos called “101” to give entrepreneurs and start ups small business fundamentals “before they even walk in the doors,” a “Pitch” process giving entrepreneurs a chance to sell their ideas to regional investors, the “Spotlight” program

offering quarterly events to connect industry leaders with entrepreneurs, and the “Honor” program tailored to help military veterans who want to start and grow their own businesses.

“It’s a lot, but I think it proves that how it all can be done is through partnerships,” Boylan said. “That’s how we’ve been successful, that’s how can build W/B Connect.”

Even as they spoke, the auditorium space was in use, several people sat with laptops in the open area, and Sean Bieski worked in a small space on the start-up he’s part of, “illo.”

“I work with two other gentlemen on this project, it’s a pillow you can use in a variety of different settings, however suits you best,” he said, picking up a sample. “What is different, and why it’s so cool, is that it turns inside out and transforms into a hoodie.”

Illo is poised to go public any day. They have manufactured some overseas and have created a website — illo.shop — that should have launched by the time you read this.

The goal is, of course, to grow, and the Innovation Center’s upstairs incubator has room for that. In fact, you can think of the whole building as something akin to a school. The Think Center is a sort of pre-school/elementary center where entrepreneurs learn the

basics, the incubator is more of a high school where they get down to details and start producing and selling, and once they are big enough, they graduate as a full business, moving into a larger space as needed.

INVENT Penn State may have been a relatively small part of the initial financing package, but it remains a big part of the success, Boylan said. Like other colleges and businesses, it has provided intern opportunities, and “is a big proponent of the Spotlight program.”

And the INVENT Penn State isn’t done in the region. It is helping a similar center open in downtown Hazleton, in what used to be a bingo hall.

“It’s a former blighted property donated for the purpose of creating this business incubator,” explained Krista Schneider of the Downtown Hazleton Alliance for progress. “It will be mostly co-working space, desks will be available for entrepreneurs, Penn State will operate it so they have shared resources.”

As was the case with the Wilkes-Barre Think Center, Barron announced a \$50,000 grant in February to get the Hazleton Center started. At the time, a media release pointed out how the INVENT Penn State program has boosted collaboration and innovation through the state, citing more than 2,500 faculty and staff engaged in activities, hundreds of entrepreneurs supported, 80 new products developed, 79 start-ups launched and 110 student internship programs created.

INVENT Penn State isn’t just helping entrepreneurs develop their ideas, it’s designed to transform the university itself.

“We are building momentum in establishing a culture where entrepreneurialism is embedded into who we are as an institution,” Barron said when the Hazleton grant was announced. “We believe that if we remove obstacles that stand in the way of launching new businesses, we open up endless opportunities to thrive.”

Reach Mark Guydish at 570-991-6112 or on Twitter @TLMarkGuydish

Kombucha business keeps growing for Drums woman

By Brigid Edmunds

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Natalie Lynn shows no signs of slowing down.

Her business, Counterpart Kombucha, formerly Natalie’s Craft Kombucha, is being sold in three states, comes in 19 flavors — ranging from herbal and floral to sweet — and has a steady following on social media.

“We call it the ‘booch fam,’” she said.

Kombucha is a fermented beverage that starts with caffeinated black or green tea and sugar, which are ingested by a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast, or a scoby, yielding probiotics that can aid in digestion, immune support and other health areas.

Lynn said her customers have experienced improvements in conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn’s disease, colitis and acid reflux disease. She also said kombucha is known to help those suffering from arthritis and skin conditions.

“What I love about being a small business is I get to hear these things,” Lynn said. “Science has been catching up to the trend of kombucha as it’s been happening. I was hoping there would be something to validate what I’ve been saying. A lot stems from gut health.”

Lynn, 30, recently moved to Drums from Elysburg, allowing her easier access to the areas she sells kombucha, as well as close access to Interstate 81.

“This area is amazing,” she said. “In terms of distribution, you’re right by 81.”

Since starting the business four years ago, Lynn has continued to expand the variety of her product, as well as the locations where it can be bought.

“I couldn’t have seen any of this coming,” she said of her continued success.

Lynn said a lot of her success is owed to word-of-mouth in the beginning, but she also uses social media to interact personally with those who are purchasing the product.

“It’s so amazing and I really thrive on that,” she said.

Through this, she said the community between customers has flourished as well.

Currently, her kombucha is sold in cities in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland. She has expanded into cities such as Baltimore and Pittsburgh, and continues to expand her business in Northeastern Pennsylvania as well.

“The expansion is really fun and exciting,” Lynn said. “I am learning about new areas as I’m expanding into them.”

One of her newest clients in the area is Powerhouse Eatery in White Haven. The restaurant will feature a selection of flavors in their lunch menu, as well as making cocktails using the drink on their dinner menu.

When Red Leaf Salad Company opened their Wilkes-Barre location last year, they announced they would carry all of Lynn’s flavors.

“I couldn’t believe it when they said they were going to do every flavor,” she said.

Lynn said she first tried kombucha 11 years ago, knowing little about it other than its potential health benefits, and began brewing it a little more than four years ago.

She started meeting customers in a parking lot in Bloomsburg on a weekly basis, and her orders were growing in size.

Since then, Lynn said she now has a “booch spot,” where she makes the product, as well as one employee, but the way she approaches the craft is the same.

“We’re still doing everything by hand,” she said. “So every label, lid, seal, flavoring, brewing, still done by hand.”

And as far as choosing flavors, Lynn said she “can never stop.”

“You get really into it, drinking something like the every day,” she said.

“You want to have options.”

So, Lynn said she thinks a lot about flavors for the drinks, taking inspiration from what’s fresh and available locally.

“I like to keep it fun and do seasonal flavors and so many flavors,” she said.

“Forming relationships with local farmers has been so tremendous,” she said. “Because they know what they’re growing, of course, and they can also say ‘oh my gosh you’ll love this.’”

She said the relationships are partnerships between the two passions they share.

In the last year, Lynn had to rename her brand, after learning a company in Florida had her name trademarked.

She said after countless hours of brainstorming and thinking of different possible names, she landed on Counterpart.

“I feel like it’s so much more than a business,” she said. “It feels like it’s a part of me. My counterpart.”



Brigid Edmunds | Times Leader

The Powerhouse Eatery in White Haven recently began carrying Natalie Lynn’s Counterpart Kombucha.

Center

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the case.

The company's scanning services come in handy for government agencies and school district.

With the recent increased concern about school safety, Thomas said it is important for building plans to be available to first responders.

"Every state and local agency and municipality should have all their blueprints existing digi-

tally in the event that the first responders get there and they need to know what room to get into, where the is panel to shut off the power ...," he said. "All these things need to exist digitally outside the frame work of the offices, so the people can access that.

"That's one of the services we offer."

Thomas is happy to have his business in downtown Wilkes-Barre.

"I think our business model works better in a place like this than it would anywhere else,"

he said. "I think we have relationships with our customers that run beyond just the price tag. And I'm not saying people should do business with me just because I'm local because I don't believe that. Because if we are not offering them a value add, then they may as well just get it off the internet."

He added that he gets plenty of business owners come through his doors that are running large organizations out of the basements of their homes.

Think

From page 9

they are in no hurry.

He does, however, offer an unsolicited pitch for prospective employees. "We are working to again expand the team. If anyone has any interest in it, we're looking for skilled sales professionals. They can send an email to jobs@mobiniti.com.

"We love it here," he

said. "We really like the space, with the glass ceiling, and the light coming in." He glances up at an ample expanse of natural light over the entire office space. Then, hardly missing a beat, he hits the metaphor.

"A glass ceiling we're going to smash someday, as we continue to grow."

Smash metaphorically, of course. When the old Woolworth was renovated, that glass ceiling

was rather deliberately meant to be smashed by every business that begins in what Boylan calls "the area's first incubator."

And the last measure of success may be that sincerest form of flattery, imitation. High-tech business incubators, he noted, have been springing up like, well, upstarts.

Reach Mark Guydish at 570-991-6112 or on Twitter @TLMarkGuydish

Wielage

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has another passion and another business project blossoming: Fitness FC, an electronic hub designed to bring together adults looking for pick-up soccer games.

Running like a thread throughout his life and endeavors, though, is Wielage's passion for history. His offices are filled with historic maps and prints from across Northeastern Pennsylvania, many with a focus on the region's industrial

history.

He strongly believes that projects like the Irem Temple restoration could help fuel interest in "heritage tourism" here.

"The Wyoming Valley was the heart of the revolutions: We had an instrumental role in the American Revolution and an instrumental role in the Industrial Revolution. We have an inspirational 300-year history here," he said.

With hundreds of millions of people within a 300-mile drive, he believes the market exists to better show-

case that history for visitors.

"We don't need people in California being like, 'I want to go to Wilkes-Barre!' We just need people to be like, jump in the car and come here for the day, or stop by as they're driving through on (Interstates) 81, 84 or 80," Wielage said.

"We could not be better located to cultivate a heritage tourism economy than where we are. It's about creating jobs for people of all skill levels — restaurant, hospitality, tour directors, people that know the Valley."

Napleton Automotive Group making splash

By Dj Eberle
djeberle@timesleader.com

PLAINS TWP. — The combination of the new facilities for their BMW, Subaru and Porsche dealerships and the introduction of Ed Napleton Automotive Group as the new owners has business booming for BMW of Wyoming Valley, Subaru of Wyoming Valley and Porsche Wyoming Valley.

The BMW and Subaru dealerships have been at their new Highway 315 facilities since March 2017, with Porsche having moved into its new Highway 315 home this past October, while the Napleton Auto Group took over in February.

Between the new facilities and new ownership, Steve Ubaldini Sr. and his three dealerships have been able to take their business to the next level.

"Subaru for example, we've had a 20-plus percent increase in business moving to that new location," Ubaldini, the managing partner of the three dealerships, said. "With all of the dealerships they have kind of scattered around the country, every store you have, everybody learns things, and the nice thing is when somebody learns how to do something better that gets passed along very quickly. The Napleton Group, they're very, very keen on monitoring everything, making sure

everything is properly, done the right way."

Since the Napleton Automotive Group took over ownership in February, Ubaldini has seen an uptick in production behind the scenes.

The autogroup has helped Ubaldini and his staff with different processes and planning to help efficiency at the three dealerships. They've also provided the dealerships with better resources to "help us with our costumers."

Napleton Automotive Group offers different "automated ways of looking at everything," which is something that wasn't the case in the past. It makes things easier for Ubaldini and his staff.

"It's kind of amazing," Ubaldini said. "They had some reports that they automatically run scans on your used car inventory and let you know if you have any car on your lot that has an open recall that you should get completed before you sell the car. A lot of really pretty slick stuff that they brought to the table."

One of the biggest takeaways from Napleton Automotive Group coming on as the ownership group for the BMW, Subaru and Porsche dealerships has been Ubaldini's new ability to bounce ideas off of other people who have been in his shoes before and have been able to solve these new-found problems. It's an opportunity

that he might not have had before.

"It's very helpful," Ubaldini said. "To have somebody that if we have an issue that I can call and you can talk about a problem or opportunity, and to have someone that can say that they've experienced it before and, 'Here's what we did and this was successful,' and to give you some insight in how to handle a problem or opportunity."

Not only do the new facilities help Ubaldini keep a larger inventory for his Subaru and Porsche dealerships specifically, but it has improved customer service as well.

They've more than doubled their service bays at the dealerships and have upgraded the size and amenities in the waiting areas — like high-speed WiFi, large-screen televisions, areas for children to go in and play and different refreshments and snacks.

They've also added covered service drives that allows customers to pull up and take advantage of when the weather is poor. The service drives also now have "tred-spec machines," which can automatically measure the depth of the car's tires and allows the service staff the ability to tell the car owner if their tires aren't aligned correctly. The service staff gains this knowledge "seamlessly" and "within seconds."

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1930

Founder Benjamin Cohen, 26, starts Benco in a bank building that houses most of the town's dental offices.



1968

First dental distributor to hire an equipment specialist, helping dentists navigate the complexities of opening a new office.

1972

Hurricane Agnes submerges Benco. Though not insured, Builder Larry Cohen reopens.

1974

First full-service distributor to build a hub-and-spoke distribution network, leveraging the power of upstart UPS.

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1996

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2010

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2011

First independent U.S. dental distributor to operate coast-to-coast, with the opening of a 5th distribution center.



2014

First to launch an open in-office restoration production system, OneVisit*.

2016

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